

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Take Charge of Your Habits,” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for September 13, 2015. The lesson is found on page 11 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

# the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

“It all had to end like this. I knew that late or early, I would die. God, take care of my family,” he posted on Facebook. A text to his probation officer said: “I have a feeling I will not make 16. Don’t tell my mom I’m telling you this. Whenever I die, let her know that I always loved her. Straight up, this is the end of my story.” Cesar was 15 years old, living in the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas. He had just received a phone call from a drug cartel, telling Cesar that they needed him. “We are coming for you. No need to hide,” they said. After receiving the text, his probation officer called the sheriff, and officers arrived before the drug lords. They found Cesar holding two kitchen knives to defend himself, a bulletproof vest and a safe stashed under his bed. Cesar was taken into custody where he suffered a nervous breakdown.

Cesar was introduced to the drug cartel at the age of 12 when he rode along with a friend to pick up marijuana. They were paid \$1,000 in cash upon delivery, with \$6,000 promised in addition. Even though Cesar insisted that he wanted no part of that life, the drug lords picked him up from Eagle Pass Junior High School and demanded that he work jobs for them. They gave him a cell phone and told Cesar they would call with further instructions. When he wouldn’t answer their calls, a man came to his house, telling Cesar, “You work for me. You do what I say when I say it and how I say to do it. Without any errors or I will kill you.” He ordered Cesar to drive a truck 20 miles to a ranch. The truck was stripped, packed with cash, and reassembled. Cesar drove the truck back to Eagle Pass, where he was paid \$15,000 in cash. He had just finished sixth grade.

Since then Cesar smuggled marijuana, cocaine, heroin, pills—even people. Cesar says that he always wanted out, but was terrified of what would happen if he disobeyed orders. On one occasion, Cesar and a dozen or so other teens were told to go to a party just across the border. When they arrived, armed men grabbed them and threw them all in a truck—all except a boy named Eduardo. He was loaded into another vehicle. They were all taken to a ranch and ordered to line up—except for Eduardo. He was pulled off the truck and forced to kneel. “This is what happens if you don’t do what we say,” the boss said. He pushed Eduardo’s head back and slit his throat. Apparently Eduardo had been called on to do a job, but said that he couldn’t do it right then. From that day on Cesar did exactly as he was told.

He was eventually released from the cartel at the age of 15. He started back to school, worked hard, and tried to get his life together. “After everything I’ve done, after all the problems I’ve caused, I just want out. I want out of all this. But I know that if they ever need me, I have to go back,” he said. And he was right. On Wednesday, September 25, 2013 Cesar got the phone call from the cartel. His good-bye text to his probation officer ultimately saved his life. Cesar is 17 now, in jail awaiting a deportation hearing. He is hopeful, and he is alive.

*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:*

**This may seem like an extreme example of how drugs can ruin someone’s life, but the story is true. How have you seen drugs influence someone in a negative way?**

**What are some other destructive habits that you’ve seen in people’s lives?**

**God asks us to refrain from habits and practices that hurt us, those we love, and our relationship with Him. Today we’re going to look briefly at three dangerous habits: drugs, sensuality, and profanity.**



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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