

Use “The Scene” to introduce “No Responsibility?” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for May 29, 2016. The lesson is found on page 81 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

“My upbringing made me do it.” That was basically the defense of Ethan Couch, the so-called “affluenza” victim who, at age 16, got drunk and drove his truck into four pedestrians, killing them all, and also severely injuring two passengers in his truck. And indeed, that statement has some truth to it. The history that has since been reported and continues to unfold about Couch’s childhood and the notable lack of discipline in his life reveals a sad story of a kid without structure, a kid who was allowed to drink at a young age, a kid who routinely sought out trouble—and routinely received no consequences for his acts.

Even after Ethan was charged and convicted of intoxication manslaughter (and given ten years on probation), he was seen at a party with alcohol—a violation of his terms of probation. Then his mother later took him on a “trip” to Mexico, where they appeared to be on the run from authorities.

Ethan is now serving 720 days in jail (a sentence delivered back in April, after Ethan turned 19). This week his mother was indicted for hindering apprehension of a felon and money laundering, charges that both came out of the trip to Mexico. It’s hard to say if either of them will be changed by this experience (though it is certain the families of the victims have been forever changed), but at least they are now learning something about what discipline looks like.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above story to read. Then discuss it in this way:

What stands out to you about this story? What do you think of the claim “my upbringing made me do it”? Is there ever a situation in which that would be a valid excuse?

It seems that from a young age, Ethan was never made to take responsibility for any of his actions. Instead, he was even encouraged to engage in some illegal behavior. And there often seemed to be money available from his parents to pay for any damage he did. If you were in Ethan’s situation, how do you think it would affect you? Imagine that your parents never disciplined you. How do you think that would change you?

You can only take responsibility for actions if you have the ability to make decisions and change your behavior. There is power in responsibility. Imagine if one person had stopped Ethan that day that he got into his truck. How might this story cause you to think differently about your own actions and responsibilities?

Sometimes we feel powerless to change problems in our world. But our Bible story today will show us what responsibilities we do have, and how taking those on can make a real difference.