Expect More Out of Your Kids

Earlier this week, I participated in a discussion concerning alcohol and advertising. The debate was over whether alcohol companies target youth in their advertising. There is very strong evidence to suggest that the alcohol companies do in fact target adolescent audiences even though such persons are under the legal age to consume alcohol. The prevailing thought that came out of this group discussion was that large numbers of teens in our country drink and there are a number of factors that contribute to this problem. Perhaps part of the blame can be shared by the alcohol companies and a permissive society. Some said the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of parents. I believe this to be true, which leads me to ask, "What about parents today who have the idea that teens are going to engage in this behavior no matter what?" I know of parents who have built areas in their own backyards in order for their children to have "parties." One parent who did this told me, "at least I know where my son is, and I do not have to worry about him driving home drunk." At the time, his child was well under the legal drinking age.

The idea of *its going to happen anyway* is everywhere in our society. Not only do we hear this in reference to teen consumption of alcohol, but we hear it in other areas as well:

- Sex. We are told *since it is going to happen* we better supply our youth with so-called "safe-sex" alternatives. Some parents now allow their children to have their boyfriend/girlfriend over to sleep together at home, because *it's going to happen anyway.*
- Drugs. In Oregon, state legislators have passed a needle exchange law for heroine addicts. This is so they can turn in their dirty needles and exchange them for sterile ones in an effort to suppress the spread of HIV. *It's going to happen*, we're told and because of this some now even lobby to legalize drug use in America.

The *it's going to happen anyway* line of thinking is scary because it places our culture on an extremely slippery slope. Could we not apply it to cheating? Lying? Smoking? Homosexuality? Reckless driving? Anything and everything? There is no end to it! Christians beware! The world can and does influence our thinking. Are we prepared to stand up for godly values and moral principles? Are we ready to do the *hard work* of instilling these values into our children?

What the *it's going to happen anyway* approach suggests and why you need to be aware of it:

It suggests a ***defeatist mentality.*** In effect, big business, some parents, and society in general attempt to lower the bar for our youth on a daily basis. How dare we throw up our hands and say we are helpless to correct a problem! Parents…**expect more out of your kids.** Hold them to high standards of morality and conduct. Peter wrote, *do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior,* 1 Peter 1:14-15. We need to believe in our kids – they are capable of doing incredible things for God. They can be tremendous sources of light – if we will lovingly encourage them to do it.

It suggests a certain degree of ***parental laziness.*** In most cases, parents who give themselves over to this approach are not holding themselves to high moral standards. It takes time and effort to *train* our children in the ways of righteousness. It is the job of the parents to *bring* their children *up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord,* Ephesians 6:4. Too many parents have let their careers and hobbies steer them away from raising their children. How many children in America are forced to raise themselves – even with both parents living inside the home?

It suggests a lack of belief in ***moral absolutes.*** There are matters of right and wrong that are unshakable. We must beware lest we give into the dominant thinking that there are different standards of morality. There is only one and it is from God. We need to humble ourselves before Him and submit to His ways. Christians have been told to *walk as children of Light, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord,* Ephesians 5:8b, 10.

It suggests that some parents are fearful of being called ***hypocrites.*** There is a well-played public service announcement on many radio stations that encourages parents to get over the fear of being called a hypocrite by their children when they tell them not to do drugs. Some parents operate under the mentality that if they once engaged in bad behavior that somehow they are forever disqualified from holding their children accountable for reckless behavior. The idea is that they are a hypocrite. If the parents have ceased the behavior and have learned from their mistakes, they **are not** being hypocritical when they forbid their children from unacceptable behavior. Going along with this, must our children know every detail of the "bad" things we did? We must be careful lest by revealing our past we give our children a "green light" to do things we would rather them not. It is easy for a child to rationalize that since his parents did it, he can too.

Parenting in today's world is hard. But it has always been hard. Our generation is no different from those who

have come before us. Imagine trying to rear children with godly values in the corrupt, first-century Roman society. For those of us who have children at home, let's raise the level of expectation. Let's live by example in holding them to God's standard and teaching them to trust in God's ways.

He who is steadfast in righteousness will attain to life, and he who pursues evil will bring about his own death. The perverse in heart are an abomination to the Lord, but the blameless in their walk are His delight, Proverbs 11:19-20.

Matthew Allen
mhallen@brownsburgchurch.info