



The Family Friend

A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

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“Glad Heart”

“My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad; my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right.” Proverbs 23:15-16

“I’m sorry, Dad.” “What for?” “For moving the grand kids so far away.”

Is there any grandparent who does not know the desperate longing of seeing and holding grandchildren that live many hours away? Spoiling the kids is a grandparent’s privilege! But how can grandma and grandpa do their job when their grandchildren live twenty hours away?

Sometimes my mom would look at the pictures of her grandchildren on the wall and cry. She longed to hold them and hug them. Grandma lived in Tennessee; her grandchildren lived in Texas, Wyoming, Kansas and Montana. So I apologized to Dad for that one time. He said, *“You have nothing to feel sorry about. We don’t care where you decide to live or what you decide to do, so long as you live a good life. That is all we ask of all you kids, is that you live good lives.”*

“Live good lives.” I think that is what Solomon had in mind when he told his son, *“If your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad.”* Every healthy mother and father wants what is best for their children. They want them to fit in, do well in school, have stylish clothing, get into a good college, and land a job that will enable them to pay their school loans. Those are all worthy desires for our children.

Solomon, though, takes the concern a step further. *“What matters most to me, son, is that your heart is wise. I want to see the seeds of honesty, purity and integrity take root in your heart. I want to see the fruit of these virtues blossom into modest behavior and speech. Son, it doesn’t matter that you climb to the top of the ladder in your profession or that you receive acclaim for social accomplishments, if you are unkind, selfish, or foolish. You will break our hearts if you achieve success at the cost of character development. Make us happy by showing a wisdom that transcends the approval of cheering crowds and is molded by the approval of God.”*

That is what my dad told me. *“Live a good life. That is what will most make your mom and me happy, is if you live a good*

life.” I understand that now. My children are growing up. I have two in college and another in high school. I want them to do well in school, attract the attention of a prospective employer, and get a job that will pay their bills and assure their retirement. But that is not what I want most for them. I want them to live good lives. My heart, and my wife’s heart, will only rejoice if our children are wise in speech and behavior.

Wise in Proverbs does not mean smart. Wise means to be shaped by God. The wise person has fed upon the Word of God, and this nutrition has strengthened the muscles and sinews of his character. *“Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge,”* Solomon advises (Proverbs 23:12).

The instructed heart has hope of becoming a wise heart. A wise heart looks beyond the joys and sorrows, the victories and defeats of this age to the all-surpassing glory of the age to come. In that age, we will all be together, family and friends, grandparents and their grandchildren, the wise and their God.

I would like to have my children and grandchildren live close to me in my last years. But even more important than that, I

want them to live a good life, because if they do, if WE do, I know I will live close to them on the other side. That will make my heart glad.

—Warren Baldwin

BRAIN DRAIN

Binge drinking by teens causes diminished mental ability.

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?” – Proverbs 23:29

Centuries ago the wise man Solomon vividly described, in Proverbs 23:29-35, the destructive physical effects of alcohol. Now a study published in the December, 2009 issue of the journal *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* reveals that those effects are especially devastating to teens.

The study found that young people who drink heavily cause significantly more damage to their brain than has previously been recognized. Kids who consume four or five drinks per occasion, two or three times a month – the classic pattern of “binge” drinking in teens – demonstrated impaired mental functioning. Even worse, such damage may be irreversible.

Researchers have known for some time that key areas of the brains of teenagers are still developing during the adolescent years. This makes their brain tissue more sensitive to the toxic effects of

drugs and alcohol. There is a distinct gender difference in the damage caused, with girls who drink heavily performing more poorly on tests of spatial functioning, which puts them at a disadvantage when dealing with mathematical reasoning, while boys who engage in binge drinking show diminished ability to pay attention.

These findings, along with the fact that there is an epidemic of teenage binge drinking in our culture, mean the stakes have never been higher. Four suggestions for parents:

1. Teach your children about the dangers of alcohol.

Some parents, relieved that their children aren't doing "dangerous" drugs like meth or cocaine, take a relaxed attitude towards underage drinking. Some even host drinking parties for their kids and their friends on the assumption that “at least they're drinking at home.”

This is not only illegal but also terribly irresponsible. We constantly see individuals in the Recovery Ministry of our church who became alcoholics while in their teens.

2. Develop a positive relationship with your kids.

Take the time, and make the effort, to be involved in their lives in a healthy way. Look for positive activities that you can and your children can get involved in together, whether sports or Scouting or 4-H or fishing. Why? Partly because it offers healthy alternatives (some kids drink out of boredom) but mostly because it beats a harsh, condemning lecture.

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The New Testament warns parents, and especially fathers, that "laying down the law" without also "laying on the love" will backfire. (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21) Teens who have involved, loving parents will develop more emotional resources and thus will be better equipped to resist temptation. Healthy, positive parental involvement is one of the best predictors of teen success.

3. Monitor your children's associations. If your kid regularly hangs out with teens who binge on alcohol, don't be fooled: yes, your kid is drinking, too! How can I be so sure? Because when you're sober it isn't much fun to hang out with intoxicated peers, and eventually a non-drinking teen with either change her friends or her habits.

4. Set a good example yourself. The most common place for teens to get beer is from their parent's refrigerator! To be absolutely safe, give your children the gift of an alcohol-free family. Demonstrate a disciplined, substance-free life yourself. And finally, take advantage of one of the best youth programs available for developing strong character and positive peer associations: *take* (not *send*) your kids with you to Bible school!

—Dan Williams, College Avenue Church of Christ El Dorado, Arkansas