

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: I found out that my 13 year-old was at a party where alcohol was present. I feel like I dropped the ball because I haven't talked to him about drinking, but I didn't think I needed to yet. Can you give me some tips?

ANSWER: I recently spoke to our 7th and 8th grade classes about underage drinking. Most of the kids said they knew other kids their age that drank. When I asked the kids if they had had a conversation with their parents about alcohol, only a couple raised their hands (certainly they might have forgotten).

Some tips:

1. Kids need repeated and heart-felt **communication with parents** about this issue; otherwise they will get their information and form their opinions from friends and the media (shudder!).
2. Kids need a lifetime of parents and significant adults **modeling** responsible drinking or abstinence. Let them experience you as being about to have a good time without alcohol.
3. Kids need help in establishing **biblical** standards about drinking and drunkenness. You cannot ensconce yourself in morality in the absence of God. Together, search the Scriptures and find out what God has to say about drunkenness. Check out EP 5:18, 1 COR 5:11, 1 COR 6:10, RM 13:13, GAL 5:21, 1 TIM 3:3, and 1 PE 4:3 to name a few. Let your kids see that your concerns and standards come from God.
4. Help establish a "**plan of action**" that your kids can execute if they find themselves in a situation where drinking is involved. Let them know they can always call you for help.
5. Let your kids know that "**It's not just the booze...**", but the rapes, car wrecks, deaths, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, ruined futures, undesirable peer groups, and spiritual destruction that are often a part of drinking.
6. **Be honest about the lure of alcohol...**most kids enjoy the way alcohol makes them feel. Not everyone who takes a drink becomes an alcoholic. A significant number of young people drink without noticeable or immediate negative consequences. Sin is attractive and deceiving; consequences are often subtle and postponed.
7. Help your kids understand that God's commandments are not established to "wreck our fun", but to **protect** us and **provide** good things for us.
8. Help your kids come up with comfortable and doable ways of saying "No" to alcohol.
9. Talk to your kids about their peer group. We are called to be "in the world, but not of the world."

In order for a young person to make godly decisions, he/she must be deeply convinced of the goodness and the strength of God...goodness, in that God wants the very best for us; strength, in that we can do all things with Christ.

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