
CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

April/May/June 2007

VOL. 17 No. 2

HOW DO YOU PREACH ABOUT TOBACCO?

by Michael Brooks

Several of us Southern Seminary students had culture shock when we served in the churches of Kentucky and Indiana. Local farmers grew tobacco, and many who didn't farm had a "patch" of tobacco to make a little extra money. The deacon chairman of the church I pastored worked in the nearby Seagram Distillery. We sometimes joked among ourselves about having to find new sins to preach against!

Should a modern pastor preach against tobacco use?

In my younger days we often railed against tobacco and challenged church members to put their cigarettes "on the altar for God." I'm not convinced this is the best approach today since we could offend people sincerely seeking God and make them uncomfortable in worship.

But this doesn't mean we should ever retreat from preaching the truth! We preach the truth about divorce and other issues while affirming our love and God's grace, and I'm convinced we ought to do this with the issue of tobacco as well.

According to the American Cancer Society, one-fifth of American adults use tobacco. Smoking damages almost every major organ in the body, is linked to ten different cancers, accounts for approximately 30 percent of cancer deaths and one-fifth of all deaths in our nation. We've also learned more recently of the danger of "second-hand" smoke. Accordingly, numbers of businesses have taken steps to limit smoking on their premises.

Young people are often tempted to use smokeless tobacco which has higher levels of nicotine and is more addictive than cigarettes. The ACS calls this

"spit tobacco" and links it to abrasion of teeth, bone loss, gum recession, leukoplakia (white sores in the mouth) and cancer of the mouth and pharynx. Unlike cancers caused by cigarettes which take years to develop, oral cancers develop in a much shorter time.

We shouldn't back away from making our message to young people what one evangelist called "gun barrel straight" as they develop their lifestyles. Even adult smokers would agree with this approach. One youth minister I worked with posted signs around the church directed at the youth which read, "Be drug free. Avoid alcohol, tobacco and other drugs." This was good advice for adults, too.

Pastors should preach about the work of God's Spirit and how he resides in us (John 14:17). Since our bodies are "the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6: 19-20, HCSB), there are implications. Pastors can plead with believers, without being overly explicit or offensive, to consider what this means in their lives.

Another possibility is to emphasize tobacco as part of our New Year's programming. Smoking may be one of several bad habits we encourage people to seek God's help in leaving behind in the New Year. Smokers wouldn't feel singled out or embarrassed with this approach. The pastor might have pamphlets available from the ACS which deal with smoking cessation.

Ministers want the best for their flock. We must find ways to encourage Christians to stop killing themselves with tobacco.

(Brooks is Associate Professor of Speech and Journalism and Assistant to the President for Public Relations at Judson College)

*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission*

TOBACCO: A KILLER ON THE LOOSE

by Dan Ireland

Fifty million American smokers consume eighty million packs of cigarettes each day. The medical evidence is quite clear: smoking cigarettes, pipes or cigars (or chewing tobacco) endangers your health. Even infrequent use of tobacco is unhealthy. There is no known safe level of the use of any tobacco product. Today, one million teenagers take up smoking each year. Each year almost four-hundred thousand Americans die prematurely from effects of smoking. Cigarette smoking accounts for the vast majority of deaths from lung cancer and from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. For years, lung cancer has been the number one cause of cancer death in men; lung cancer has now surpassed breast cancer as the leading cancer killer of women. Each year smoking kills more Americans than died in battle in World War II and Vietnam combined. (Mayo Clinic Health Book)

Surveys have found that in some areas up to one-third of all male high school and college students regularly use smokeless tobacco. Of the ten million users in this country, it is estimated that three million are under the age of 21. Studies also revealed that children as young as eight or nine years of age use smokeless tobacco regularly. The use of smokeless tobacco is linked to an increased chance of oral cancer. Smokeless tobacco has been associated with cheek, gum, tongue and lip cancer as well as periodontal disease. Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to smoking. (Mayo Clinic)

For more than two decades, the nation's most respected health organizations have come to the same conclusions about secondhand smoke: it's costly, dangerous and deadly. Secondhand smoke is a widespread threat to public health. According to the Surgeon General, "there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke," and smoke-free policies are the only effective way to protect nonsmokers from the health hazards of secondhand smoke (www.clearwaymn.org). According to the National Cancer Institute, secondhand smoke contains eleven known cancer-causing poisons and two-hundred fifty known toxins. Also, secondhand smoke contains deadly poisons like arsenic, cadmium, formaldehyde, lead and benzene. According to the California Environmental Protection Agency, last year forty-nine thousand

nonsmokers died from secondhand smoke. According to the National Cancer Institute, when a person smokes a cigarette more than four thousand chemicals are released into the air. It is reported in the "*Economic Effects of Environmental Tobacco Smoke*" exposure to secondhand smoke costs Americans more than \$9.5 billion a year in medical care, death and disease.

U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. C. Everett Koop, was among the first to urge a more determined campaign against smoking, the leading cause of preventable death and disability in the United States. Koop became appalled by the deceptive advertising and aggressive lobbying of the tobacco industry. In 1984 he launched what he called the "Campaign for a Smoke-Free America" by the year 2000. Dr. Koop's studies, reports and efforts continue to motivate various citizens' groups to achieve his stated goal to insure the reality of a "smoke free society."

ALCAP is actively involved with the Coalition for Tobacco Free Alabama working to make Alabama a smoke-free state. In Alabama the State Health Department, the Cancer Society, the Lung Association, the Heart Association, the Hospital Association and other health concerned organizations are combining efforts to pass stiffer laws to ultimately prohibit smoking in all enclosed areas. At the local level a number of cities, businesses, hospitals, restaurants, offices and industries have become smoke free. It is illegal in Alabama to sell or provide a tobacco product to anyone under nineteen years old. It is also illegal for anyone under the age of 19 years old to purchase or possess a tobacco product. "*Americans for Nonsmoker's Rights*" reports that 50.2% of the nation's population is covered by laws which restrict lighting up. Also, 22 states and 577 municipalities now enjoy smoke-free laws.

Tobacco, *A Killer on the Loose* must be stopped NOW!
The evidence is on record. Life is more precious than nicotine addiction.

(Ireland is Executive Director of ALCAP,
Alabama Citizens Action Program)

OBSERVE WORLD HUNGER SUNDAY

October 14, 2007

ORDER FREE RICE BOWLS AND WORLD HUNGER OFFERING ENVELOPES

For more information

Call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 233 or 315.....E-mail: jfarmer@alsbom.org or aallman@alsbom.org

Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery

THE IMPACT OF SMOKING ON OUR CHILDREN

by Michael B. Jackson

Smoking affects our children mainly in two areas:

- Under-age smoking
- Secondhand smoke

Nearly 90% of smokers begin at or before the age of 18 and more than 80% of all adult smokers first become regular smokers before the age of 18. A September 2000 study found that symptoms of addiction – strong urges to smoke, anxiety or irritability, or unsuccessfully quit attempts – can appear in young kids within weeks or only days after occasional smoking first begins, and well before daily smoking has even started. Every year an estimated 13,000 Alabama children under the age of 18 become regular, daily smokers. One-third of all young smokers will die prematurely from smoking, according to the Coalition for A Tobacco Free Alabama.

Common signs of teen smoking or tobacco use include:

1. Regular use of breath mints and/or eye drops
2. Noticeable physical symptoms of blotchy skin, red eyes, and runny nose
3. A sudden change in peer groups
4. Very secretive behaviors
5. Possible decrease of interest in school
6. Decreased motivation and lack of energy
7. Fluctuation in mood
8. Unforeseen change in behavior patterns

Any one of these behaviors alone may not indicate tobacco use. However, if we can help our teenager resist taking that first puff, we dramatically improve their odds for a longer and healthier life. Comprehensive tobacco prevention programs, recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), designed to teach children the hazards of smoking and counter the tobacco industry's marketing efforts to entice youth to smoke, have proven to reduce smoking among children in states with fully-funded programs.

Secondhand smoke is worse than the smoke a smoker inhales from cigarettes. Secondhand smoke is more concentrated. Children face a higher risk than adults of the negative effects of secondhand smoke. Not only is a child's body still developing physically, but their breathing rate is faster than adults.

When air is tainted with cigarette smoke, young developing lungs receive a higher concentration of inhaled toxins than do older lungs. And think about it: young children have less control over their surroundings than the rest of us. They depend on us to provide them with clean air to breathe. Prohibiting smoking in public places is an important step in protecting our children from breathing passive, or secondhand smoke. In the U.S., 16 states prohibit smoking in all public places, including workplaces.

(Jackson is President of DuBois Institute)

Study: Outdoor smoke gets in your lungs

People may inhale high levels of secondhand smoke even on outside patios and sidewalk cafes, a new study shows.

The U.S. surgeon general has found that indoor secondhand smoke kills nearly 50,000 non-smokers a year. Authors say their paper, in the May issue of the *Journal of the Air & Waste Management Association*, is one of the first published studies to show that outdoor cigarette smoke could pose a risk.

Clean air typically has fewer than 20 micrograms per cubic meter of such particles, but outdoor smoke plumes may have more than 1,000 micrograms says lead author Neil Klepeis of Stanford. Someone who sits within 2 feet of a single cigarette at an outdoor cafe could inhale as much pollution as in a smoky tavern, Klepeis says.

Klepeis notes that restaurant workers often get very close to customers while taking orders and serving food. And patrons who breathe in secondhand smoke from several cigarettes over a few hours could be exposed to average daily levels higher than those considered safe by the Environmental Protection Agency, he says.

Indoor smoke can linger for hours, but researchers found

that outdoor smoke disappears shortly after a cigarette is extinguished. People can protect themselves by staying upwind from smoke or by sitting at least 6 feet away from a single smoker. Klepeis says, or further away from a group of smokers.

More than 1,000 communities now restrict outdoor smoking, according to the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation. More than 500 curtail smoking in parks, beaches and other outdoor spots. Others curb smoking near doors, ventilation systems, automated teller machines and even movie lines.

Some question the need to regulate outdoor smoke.

"If you burn anything, the smoke contains hundreds of noxious particles," Simon Chapman, editor of the journal *Tobacco Control* and a professor at the University of Sydney's School of Public Health, says in an e-mail. He notes that "people get brief exposures to intense plumes of noxious smoke from barbecues, campfires and home cooking, yet we don't ban those."

(Liz Szabo, USA Today, May 8, 2007)

FACTS & ISSUES

Compiled by Joe Bob Mizzell, Director
Office of Christian Ethics/Chaplaincy Ministries – Alabama Baptist State Convention
1-800-264-1225 / 334-288-2460 / fax 334- 288-2693

ACCIDENTAL PORN

Children and teens are being exposed to online pornography in record numbers, usually by accidentally viewing sexually explicit material while surfing the Internet.

A study appearing in the February issue of *Pediatrics* said 34 percent of Internet users age 10 to 17 had unwanted exposure to online pornography in the last year. According to the Associated Press report, the riskiest sites for unwanted exposure are file-sharing programs, but images also pop up in chat rooms and game sites. Researchers said filtering software helped block images, but even it was not always completely effective.

“The devil is attacking Christians of all ages through sex,” said Richard Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. “The Bible says that parents have the responsibility to rear their children in the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord. That responsibility includes placing filters on every computer in the house and then monitoring your children’s Internet activity. You can’t depend on a filter to catch everything, so you need to keep your eyes and ears open.”

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Feb. 6, 2007

HIGH-TECH THIEVERY: Who owns the music?

Nearly 90 percent (86%) of teenagers polled recently by The Barna Group indicated music piracy — “including copying a CD for a friend or downloading non-promotional music online for free” — is either morally acceptable or not a moral issue.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, 2007-Dwayne Hastings

DEATHS & DISEASE FROM TOBACCO USE IN THE USA

- * People who die each year from their own cigarette smoking: 400,000
- * People who die each year from others’ smoking (secondhand smoke & pregnancy smoking): 38,000 to 67,500
- * Kids under 18 alive today who will ultimately die from smoking (unless smoking rates decline): 6,000,000+
- * People in the USA who currently suffer from smoking-caused illness: 8.6 million

Smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined, with thousands more dying from spit tobacco use.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, October 30, 2006

NEVER ON A SUNDAY?

At last, scientific proof of the link between shopping and sin. A study by Daniel Hungerman of the University of Notre Dame and Jonathan Gruber of MIT found that when states dropped blue laws (which ban Sunday commerce), church attendance dipped by 15 percent among those who had been going weekly. That’s not all: Churchgoers became as likely as non-attendees to use drugs, and the gap between the two groups’ heavy-drinking rates closed sharply. Hungerman’s take: “What you do Sunday morning could make a big difference in how you spend Saturday night.”

Reader’s Digest, December 2006



STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Alabama Baptist State Convention
Office of Christian Ethics/Chaplaincy Ministries
Joe Bob Mizzell, Director
2001 E. South Boulevard · P.O. Box 11870
Montgomery, Alabama 36111-0870

“Great Commission Ministries”

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Montgomery, AL
Permit No. 441