

The Family Friend



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

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Addiction: My Father & Me

God gave my father many gifts. He was intelligent, handsome and physically strong. In his youth, he was “tough,” and yet he knew the words of the Bible as well as anyone I have ever met. He could speak fluently — without notes — intelligently and, often, wisely. But my father was addicted to nicotine, hard liquor, and gambling.

In my earliest memories, my father smoked — first unfiltered Camels, then filtered Camels and, later, Pall Malls. When he discovered that he could buy a non-smokers insurance policy if he smoked cigars, he switched to Rum Soaked Crooks and, later, Bering Imperial Cigars. Today, 25 Bering Imperials sell for \$96.25.

Dad had a champagne taste, but he had no budget. He smoked from the moment he woke up in the morning until he went to bed at night. He showered with a lit cigar. If he swam in a pool, he swam with a lit cigar. When my father's first grandson was born, someone told my sister

that the child favored my father. “Does he have a cigar in his mouth?” she asked.

My father's trouble with alcohol began when he was sixteen and left home for a year. Later, he decided he wanted to preach, and he overcame his thirst for alcohol for some time. By the time I was in high school, he had begun to drink more and more. He favored Scotch — the Johnny Walker Red Label. He would only have “one” drink at night, but that “one” was refreshed over and over. When he drank, he would call me lazy and worthless, suggesting that I would never amount to anything. I knew the alcohol was talking, but it was still painful to hear.

As for gambling, my father preferred the horses frequenting Bay Meadows, a track near our home in San Mateo. He enjoyed Las Vegas from time to time, and who knows what else. If you gamble long enough, the house always wins. My father gambled long enough.

I detested smoke from cigarettes and cigars and suffered from asthma as a small child. As I grew older, I pleaded with my father to quit smoking, but he could not do it.

Meanwhile, my father's alcohol problem became unbear-

able. In the late 1980s, we intervened, persuading him to enter an alcohol treatment program in Minneapolis. He quit drinking for a while, but soon he was again a slave to alcohol. I don't know that my father ever tried to quit gambling. As in the song — “Papa was a rolling stone” when my father died, “all he left me was alone.”

In his life, my father suffered pain and grief. His mother and father had died of tuberculosis by the time he was seven years old. Two of his older sisters died from tuberculosis by 1949. Many people loved my father and would have done anything for him. His choices made no sense to me. Whenever I asked his advice, his counsel was wise — but he did not follow his own advice.

Jesus teaches that “everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin” ([John 8:34 NASB](#)). In my father's early life, drinking was his choice, but once he passed a certain point, he became a slave to alcohol — and he could not stop drinking or smoking or gambling. The answer was clear — turn to God in faith. But faith requires humility, and my father was a proud man.

The Bible warns us,

“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 16:5) and “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). My father was determined to live life his way — as he had chosen — without counting the cost to his health, his family, or his God.

I am my father's son, yet God expects something more of me. I cannot blame my father for who I am. God expects me to learn from my father's mistakes and be a better man than he was.

God showed mercy to King Nebuchadnezzar, who did many things in his ignorance. But God showed no mercy to his son, King Belshazzar. Indeed, the prophet Daniel delivered the message of God to Belshazzar, reminding him of all that happened to his father, and then added, “Yet you, his son Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven . . . You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see, hear or understand, but the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified” (Daniel 5:22, 23).

I have avoided some of the sins of my father, but other sins have been more challenging. The Bible tells us to take every thought captive, to eat and drink in moderation and to control every physical passion. I love to eat and recently found myself becoming addicted to diet Coke.

Humility, trust in God, accountability, and prayer, are

necessary for self-control (or temperance). They are — inevitably — a daily battle. I discipline my body and enslave it, Paul wrote, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be lost (1 Corinthians 9:27).

That call to self-control terrified Felix. You know what? It scares me, too.

—Terry J. Gardner, via Does God Exist, 1st Quarter, 2017. Article with pictures and credits for them available online: <http://www.doesgodexist.org/Journals-2017/1stQtr17/Addiction-MyFatherandMe.html>



If I Only Had It to Do Over

I won't beat around the bush. If I had it to do over, I would spend more time with my children. I would spend more time talking to them and listening to them. Praying with them and playing with them.

It's hard to believe that it's been 20 years since they were small. Jeremy is now 32. Ashley is 29. And Jessica is 26. My, where has the time gone? It seems yesterday when Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy were such a part of our home. Days turned into weeks. Weeks to years. And years to decades.

Oh, I heard the warnings . . .

- ◆ “Kids grow up so fast.”

- ◆ “Enjoy your children while they are young.”
- ◆ “They won't be with you forever.”

And I remember the verses . . .

- ◆ “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children . . . (Deut. 6:6, 7).
- ◆ “Train up a child in the way he should go . . . (Prov. 22:6).
- ◆ And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

I remember a saintly sister telling me once that the happiest time of her life was when her children were at home. I remember hearing a preacher once say, “*There are special moments that only come around once in a lifetime . . . And if you miss them, you just miss them.*” I can remember one of my girls telling her Bible class teacher, “*But, Daddy's never home.*” *If only I had listened . . . If only I could roll back the clock . . . If only they were small again . . . If only I had stayed at home . . . If only . . .*

God's grace is sufficient. It is twenty years earlier than I imagined. He has given me the chance. How will I use the time?

—Keith Parker, via the **Mannington Messenger**