

For the past twenty some years, my family and I have been involved with firework sales during the 4th of July season in both Arkansas and Tennessee. We have numerous funny stories about things that have happened during these times, so many in fact, we are very tempted to write a book about our experiences.

On the other hand, we have witnessed a number of things that are not so good. We called the police when a man decided to beat up his wife on the far end of our parking lot. By the time the police arrived, we had already broken up the fight and the police simply hauled the participants to jail.

On another occasion, we saw two ladies (let me change that to women) fight over a parking place, complete with racial slurs. We have caught numerous shoplifters, had people pick up some product and run, and had people try to short-change us. Of course, there is always the hot check and stolen check problem. We also had an isolated incident when a law officer threatened to shut us down if we didn't give him a "really good deal." We didn't!

But of all the situations that have irritated me, the one that follows is very close to the top of my list. Unfortunately, this situation happens nearly every year. A dad brings his kids to buy some fireworks but we don't allow him in because he is smoking. For some reason he thinks he can handle smoking around explosives, but neither the fire marshal nor we share his conviction. So he stands in the doorway, upset, yelling at his kids and telling them how stupid it is to buy fireworks that are just going to go up in smoke anyway. Duh! To say something positive, at least his reasoning is consistent.

What is the ole adage? "It's hard to see the forest for the trees," or "If it was a snake it would have bitten you?" Why is it that sometimes we are so focused on a single problem, we simply miss others that may be equal or even worse? And, if you're like me, it's so much easier to see problems in others than in myself.

For example, we would probably all agree that it would be quite inexcusable to fuss at one of your kids for being overweight, while stuffing yourself with the second piece of pie. With little effort we can discover that there are an estimated 280,000 deaths each year, the major cause of which is obesity. ([Statistics Related to Overweight and Obesity: NIDDK](#)) Do you think the kids might see a little hypocrisy here?

A few years ago a young man told me his dad had beaten him after his dad caught him smoking. The problem, the young man indicated, was while taking the beating he could see the pack of cigarettes in his dad's pocket. Do you think the kids might see a little hypocrisy here? Again, with very little effort we can find that 400,000 die each year from smoking. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

No doubt we all have stories about dads and moms that drink but are upset when their underage kids do as well. How can we possibly expect kids to decide that drinking is not a good choice when they see their parents drinking, making their own stuff in the bathtub and hosting parties at the house? Do you think the kids might see a little hypocrisy here?

Although some may dispute the figure given by the MADD organization, MADD claims there are over 17,000 automobile deaths each year where alcohol is a contributing factor. (*Family News in Focus*, January 13, 2005) Many of these deaths are from underage drinking and driving.

A few months ago I was called to a hospital in White County. The son of a very good friend had just been taken to the emergency room. His heart was racing, his blood pressure was off the chart, his breathing was extremely labored and he was literally on the very edge of death. He fought for his life most of the night until, at last, the effects of the massive overdose of over-the-counter cough medicine he took was neutralized.

I don't know all the reasons he purposefully overdosed, but I do know that many adults today abuse prescription and over-the-counter drugs including, Vicodin, Oxycontin and Valium to name only a few. Many take drugs to go to sleep, to wake up, to stay awake and to try to force their bodies to do just about anything. Then when the kids begin using the same drugs, the parents get all bent out of shape. Do you think the kids might see a little hypocrisy here?

The facts are, "Nearly one in 10 high school seniors reported using the prescription painkiller Vicodin without a prescription, while roughly one in 20 said they had used Oxycontin without a prescription. A recent study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America found that one out of every five teenagers 12 to 17 years old had purposely abused a prescription drug, while one in 10 said they'd intentionally abused over-the-counter medications, such as cough syrup."

(NewsTarget.com: Teen prescription drug abuse on the rise, study finds. Saturday, December 30, 2006)

None of us are perfect, we all have our addictions whether we want to admit to them or not. But if we are going to change the future of this community and this county, we need to start with absolute honesty. We need to take a good look at ourselves and determine what our kids have learned or are learning from us in our own homes.

I'm not suggesting that just because someone takes some painkillers on occasion that their kids will turn into drug addicts, so please don't misunderstand this article.

However, if on the way home after a town meeting on the drug problem in our community, we smoke a cigarette, have a little night cap to settle our nerves and then pop a few sleep aids before bed, maybe we still don't quite get it.

(Lou Butterfield, Ed.D. is pulpit minister of the Rammel church and President of the Center for Christian Broadcasting, Inc. <http://christianbroadcasting.org> Contact: cfcbsbcglobal.net)