

Tony Dungy: 2 Major Dangers of Drinking Alcohol All Christians Should Know

In April 2001, a group of us were gathered in Jerry Angelo's office at our team headquarters, having just completed what would turn out to be my final draft with the Buccaneers. It was around 10 o'clock at night and we were chatting about the completed draft and other topics. Shortly thereafter, I headed home. As soon as the door closed behind me, my coauthor, Nathan, who was part of the Bucs' scouting department at the time, was ordered to his feet. "Get up!" He looked around, confused, and the command was given again. As he stood, he realized the towel he had been sitting on was covering the beer cooler. Out of respect for me, they had waited until I was gone.

I had tried to tell those guys for years that even though I don't drink, I didn't mind if they did. I don't mind parties—Jesus went to plenty of parties. And just because drinking isn't the right choice for me, it doesn't mean that others can't partake; after all, Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine. However, I do think there are some things that are dangerous that we need to talk to our children about. Here are several dangers of alcohol.

Alcohol Is a Drug

Again, I didn't mind those guys drinking, but what I do mind is our society's inability to see alcohol for what it truly is: a drug. We have, rightly I think, strongly warned our children about tobacco and illegal drugs, but I am concerned about what sometimes tends to be a "look the other way" relationship with alcohol. So how does your consumption of alcohol affect your kid's future behaviors when they are

placed in a situation where alcohol is present?

Drinking Is a False Rite of Passage

We don't allow anyone to drink who is under the age of 21, which I completely agree with. The unintended consequences of that law, however, is unfortunate. Because they can't legally drink until 21, many young people now view that 21st birthday drink as a rite of passage into adulthood. The law seems to have made drinking more attractive because it is forbidden until then.

I'm very sensitive to this issue, based on my profession and its financial relationship with alcohol. Our league drives a great deal of revenue from alcohol sponsorships, which certainly helps to pay my salary. It's the one aspect of working in the NFL that I really struggle with when I'm asked about it. I know that my work indirectly promotes alcohol consumption on dangerous levels. Personally, I would be willing to live with less money if it would help keep even one kid from making a mistake. I think we'd all be better for it.

The Influence of a Father

As I have reflected on my father's influence in my life, one of the things I am most grateful for is that he chose not to drink any alcohol. It would have been fine if he did, but his abstinence was a powerful example for me, maybe even more than he realized at the time. Whether in high school or college, whenever I found myself in a situation in which everybody was drinking, I always thought of my dad. Because someone that I respected so highly had chosen to not drink, I could make the same choice with confidence.

Kids imitate their father's behaviors and therefore, I encourage fathers to be careful with alcohol, and don't get near anything else that's mind-altering. It's just not worth being part of the crowd in that way, and the downside may be far worse than the upside could ever be for you and your sons.

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