Kids and Immoral Behaviour

I wrote this over a decade ago. I think things are better now. I hope so.

Something a friend said to me recently about kids she's observed in another school really struck a chord with me ... it's something I've noticed here at our school over the past ten years or so, and in the past few years it's gotten worse. I'm talking about how students, particularly Jr High students, talk to each other.

Before I go any further, I need to make something clear. I'll be talking about students, but mostly not about those students who I know are Christian. They don't have this problem, at least that I've noticed. But they <u>can</u> help all of us do something about it.
And from being in other schools a lot, I also know that this problem isn't unique to our school. It's the way a lot of young people are today. Unfortunately.

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I think it's generally true everywhere that young people talk to each other now in a way that they never used to. Here's what I've noticed.

Boys and girls will joke and talk to each other about *anything*, without embarrassment. Whether it's sex, sexual attraction, drug use, masturbation, or drinking, they talk and joke about it openly.

It used to be that these things were talked about quietly, with close friends, so that no-one would overhear. Not any more. Kids will talk about anything now, with anyone their own age, quite openly, and seem to have no worries that their talk will reflect on their character. They seem to have no concept of morality whatsoever. A more cynical person than myself might say that they have none.

When you were in school, did boys talk openly in front of girls in the class, right in the classroom for all to hear, about masturbation? Did girls discuss the size of their breasts and what type of undergarments they prefer, not only in front of all the boys around them, but *with* them?

I don't think so.

Girls actually used to be embarrassed if boys saw an out-of-place bra strap. Hard to believe.

One of the most disturbing things I've heard in our hallways? I overheard a group of grades 5, 6 and 7 boys talking about their great Saturday night and how they were out until 5 am drinking. There was a lot of hilarity about how drunk some of them had been. Prior knowledge on my part leads me to believe this was not hyperbole. Not with these kids.

Grade 5, 6 and 7? Don't they have parents??

Kids now use profanity openly and unabashedly when talking with each other away from the presence of teachers, much more than they used to. Every word you can imagine. They don't seem to care who overhears, either, whether it's a teacher or a little grade one kid.

Teachers at our school call them on it. It doesn't work.

What's really sad is it's not just the 'bad kids' who do these things, the way it used to be. There were *always* a few who behaved like this. There certainly were in my high school; generally, we avoided them.

But now it's all of them, even the so-called 'good kids'. Girls who are nice, good people in every other way can be overheard talking about these things with friends in the hallway, and using language that could only be described as disgusting. Comments on Facebook or other media, visible to anyone, are full of profanity. They seem to have no concept at all of how this reflects on their character. They don't seem to care. More likely they see it as the norm.

They don't talk this way to teachers or their parents, of course. But their words to each other are shameless. And I use that word deliberately.

How did this change happen? I think a big part of the problem is the popular media ... television, video games, and social media sites. It seems like immorality is the norm, everywhere. This is something I believed even before I became a Christian.

One of many peoples' favourite TV shows was 'Friends' ... a very funny show, but one that portrayed the lives of single people in their twenties whose sole preoccupation seemed to be who could get into bed with someone else. Promiscuity and frequent sex with multiple partners seemed to be the norm.

Is it any wonder that our own kids see this as a lifestyle to emulate?

Visit social media pages of students. You will be shocked at how easily they use profanity, and how quick they are to celebrate drunkenness and lewd behaviour.

Watch some 'kids' cartoons on TV. Your eyes will be opened.

I know that this sort of behaviour has always existed, especially in schools. I went to high school too. But in the past, it was never out in the open. Talk like this generally happened in corners somewhere, where it wouldn't be overheard. And the 'good kids' *never* talked like this, or about these things, where others could overhear.

So, what can we do about it? Do we *want* to do anything about it, or am I just too out of touch with reality??

I think that, as parents, we *need* to be concerned about how our children act when they are with their peers. Listen to them when they're socializing with their friends. Visit their social media pages, and the pages of their friends. Talk to them about how their behaviour, whether good or bad, reflects on their character. Let them know you are disappointed when they use profane language or do other things that reflect poorly on themselves.

At the very least, students need to learn that, regardless of how you talk or behave with your friends, there are places where it's unacceptable. Out there in the real world, adults generally work together day in and day out *without* behaving this way. Crude behaviour is *not* the norm.

Make sure your children know that drinking to excess and drunkenness is not something to be proud of. Don't make a joke of it. Don't encourage them to drink. Model moderate drinking yourself.

As Christian parents, monitor the behaviour of your child's *friends*, and don't be afraid to hold them to a higher standard when they are with your own children.

Teachers and school staff members need to play a bigger role in correcting behaviour outside of the classroom. The decline in standards of morality is something that schools can work on. They can hold all students to a higher standard, and expect better behaviour outside the classroom. They can call parents a lot. Our school has done all of these things.

As far as posting things on-line is concerned, we need to make our children (and more than one beginning teacher) understand that things they post on the internet *never ever* disappear, and could affect their prospects in the future. Any prospective teacher, for example, with photos and posts illustrating excessive drinking and profanity, could find it *very difficult* to find a job. And people who do the hiring check these things!

Christian students can accept some responsibility for changing the behaviour of their friends. I know this can be very difficult. Sometimes the need to 'fit in' and have friends can make it very hard for a Christian young person to speak out when they hear things that disturb them.

It takes someone with a strength of character and a deep love of God to take a stand. We have had students like this in the past, and they have helped make our school a good place. But now we need every student who is a Christian to speak up when they hear profanity, or when they hear immoral behaviour being celebrated. You *can* make a difference, if you have the courage.