

# A firm foundation for Faith at Work: the Christian Family

**A report prepared for 9<sup>th</sup> annual Faith@Work Forum  
by Gord Walford, Promise Sanipe and Frank Jones  
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Since CCRIs beginning in 2000, we have assumed a relationship between science, (exploring the nature, causes and consequences of Christian commitment), and inspiration, encouraging commitment in the individual, home, workplace, school, church and society, so this presentation is the mostly science part; and apologies to those uninterested in science. We believe inspiration and science nurture each other!

In the past year and a half we have focussed on the family, under the assumption that a strong Christian family is essential to productive work and civic life. In the following we present a small number of our findings, our ultimate aim being to prevent, by the Holy Spirit, a fate far worse than cancer, eternal suffering. These results are not to everyone's liking because they imply basic changes in our lifestyles and habits as no one is perfect – it is hard to change, but possible by the Holy Spirit.

**Display 1** summarizes our outline: goals, central problems, causes, effects, and use—the application to our own lives.

<p><b>A firm foundation for faith@work: Strong home+church+church groups -- CCRi research highlights in 2009</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>% of teens smoking marijuana, 2003</b></p> <table border="1"> <caption>% of teens smoking marijuana, 2003</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>Parent a non-smoker</th> <th>A smoker in 1995</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Girls</td> <td>46</td> <td>61</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Boys</td> <td>50</td> <td>60</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Gender	Parent a non-smoker	A smoker in 1995	Girls	46	61	Boys	50	60
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<p><b>by Gord Walford, Promise Sanipe and Frank Jones, Faith@Work Forum, 2009</b></p>										

1. What we (all, govt's) want for teens
2. Causes: Child health important
3. Parent health important
4. Family health important
5. Neighbourhood/school important
6. Teen "virtues" related
7. Teen "vices" related

**Our Goal:** is good children (virtue-filled), not bad (vice-free).  
 Children who are self-controlled or God-controlled: for parents are not always present and controls are not fool-proof. The goal is important. Why? Virtue is good for all family members, the family unit, church, work, and society. Also, virtues and vices tend to be negatively correlated, so we must leave those darling sins and replace them with virtues. Also, vices negatively correlate with happiness; life prospects and teen, parent and family health; and produce better students and workers, both now and in the future. Probably bad habits established in the teen years carry over to the later stages of life.

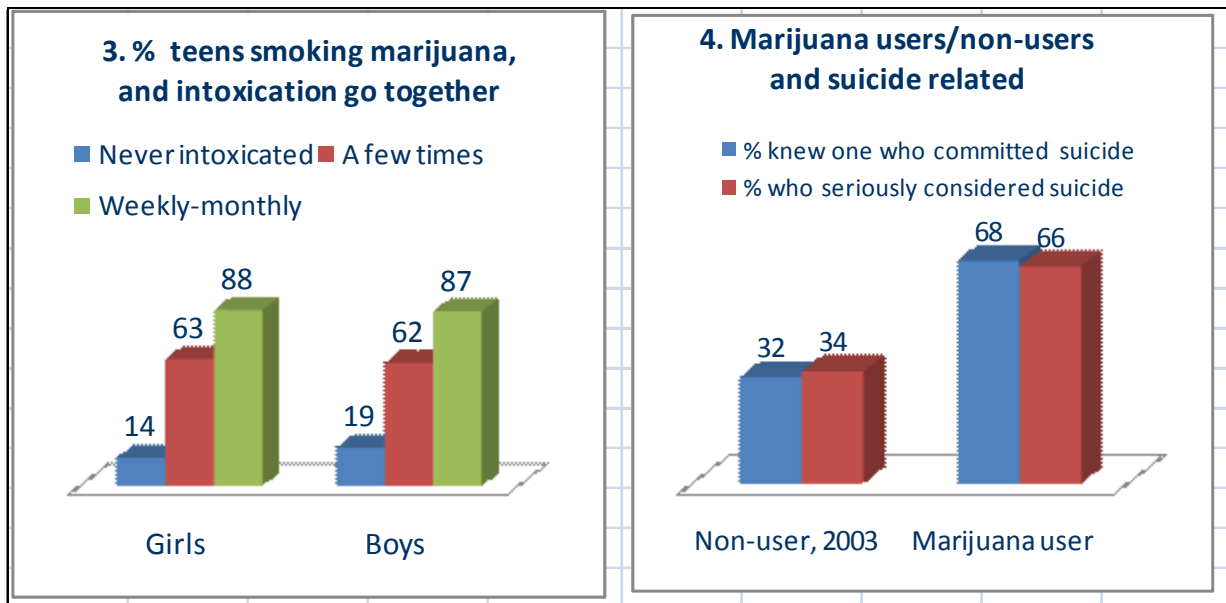
*This argument applies to all. But Christians are also concerned about eternal life: worship, prayer done for love of God the father, rather than out of a sense of duty.*

**Slide 2. The Central Problem** is, that we are far from our goal. Teen vices are widespread and grow with age. 76% of the 18-19 year olds were intoxicated in the previous year. Two thirds smoked an illicit drug. Almost as many had had consensual intercourse. Some illegal vices are more common than legal ones: intoxication; marijuana smoking in the past year. Note there is a sharp increase with age; our models control for age, and other key factors. Also, teens may delay getting into bad habits – the problems are huge at age 18-19. But even at ages 14 and 15, 1/3rd got drunk; and 1/3<sup>d</sup> smoked marijuana in the previous year. Note: in these surveys the teens self-report and we assume it is accurate; this is longitudinal data with a sample of about 2000. There are questions for parents in the surveys as well.

3. In Chart 3 we see that teen **problems are positively correlated**.

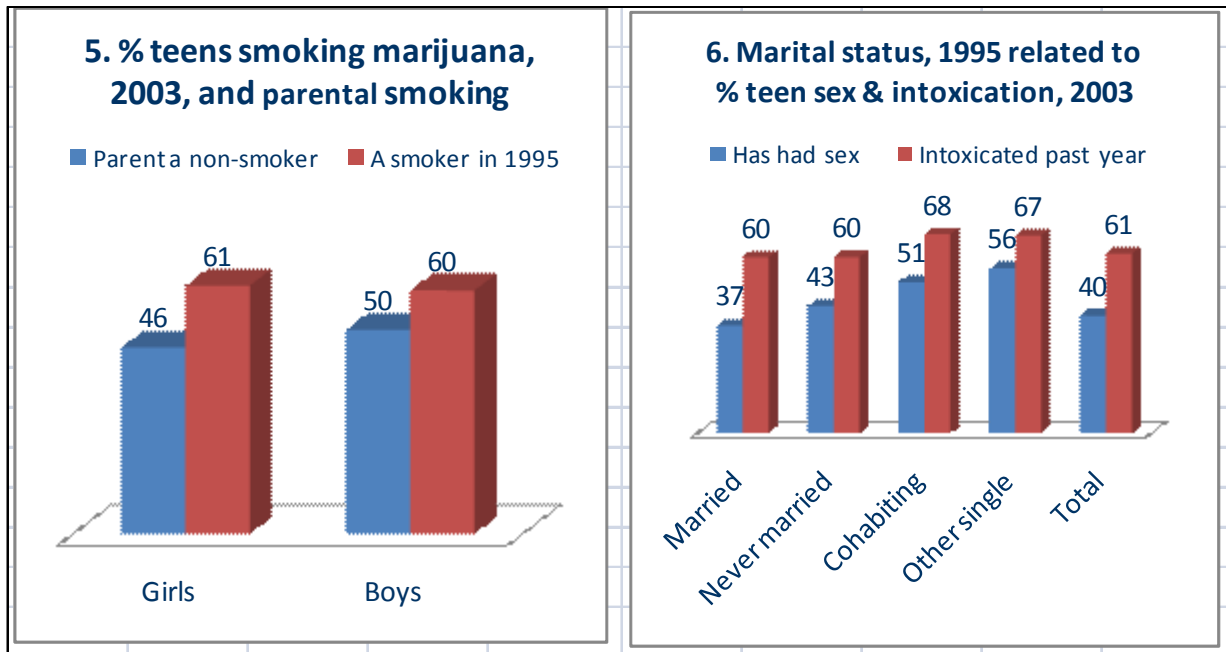
Girls and boys are similarly affected, usually, with few exceptions (boys, e.g., are more prone to sell drugs, or to vandalize). Note also that avoiding one problem is no guarantee that others will be shunned: 19% of boys, e.g., were never intoxicated but smoked marijuana in the previous year; and 14% of girls.

In fact, we found that childhood factors are relatively weak predictors of behaviour – when just one vice is included in the model, it is by far the best predictor. Some childhood factors are important for staying on track, but present behaviour is essential, and we all tend to think we can set limits on our behaviour and stick to our limits.



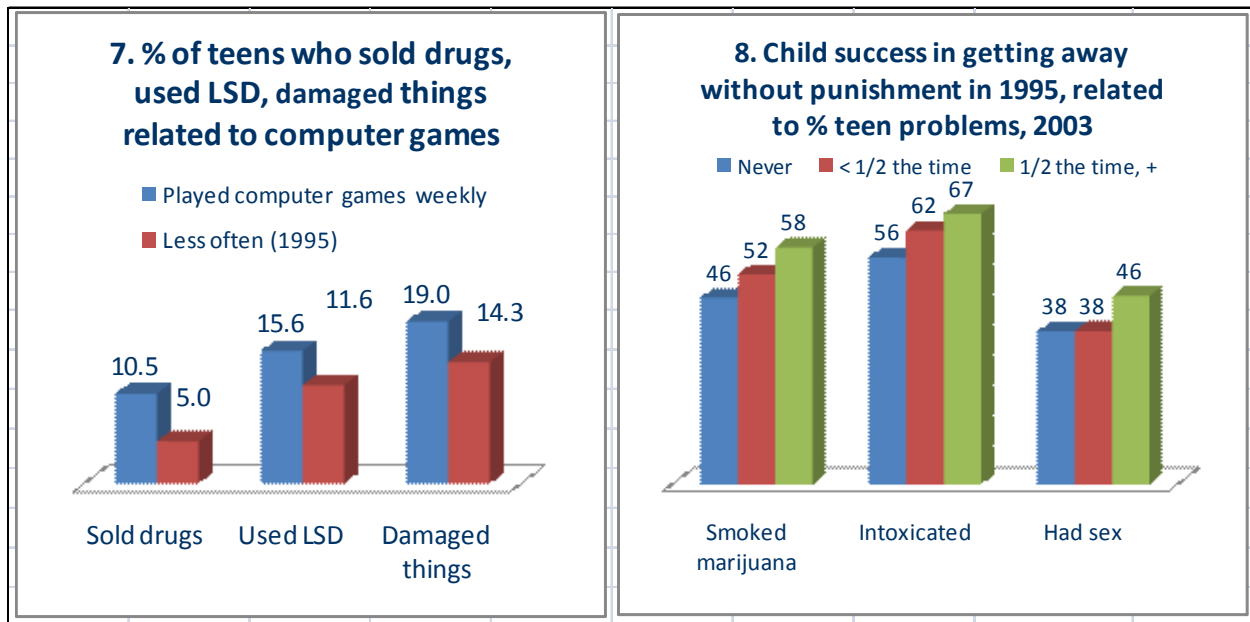
4. In Chart 4 we see that marijuana smokers are twice as likely as non-smokers to have associations with suicide: with teens who seriously considered it, or who knew someone who had committed suicide. We can assume that anyone must have felt terrible to have considered suicide. So here is an indicator of the absence of happiness: 1/3 and 2/3 of teens were very depressed – far higher than those who say they are unhappy when asked the question.

5. **Childhood causes** of teen behaviour appear in Chart 5: the first factor is whether or not one's **main parent** (the one most knowledgeable of the child) smoked in 1995. One would think that the children of parents who smoke would be far more likely to smoke marijuana when teens, but the effect is not too large – 61% vs. 46% for girls. And again, girls and boys differ little. The models, though, detect statistically significant influences of parental smoking on several unhealthy behaviours of both boys and girls.



6. Some causes of later teen problems are due to a **family influence** -- see Chart 6. Having married rather than unmarried parents helps a child, but again the differences are not great: the biggest difference is between those with married and co-habiting parents: 37% who had married parents in 1995 were intoxicated eight years later, versus 68% who had co-habiting parents. Note here that “other single” = mostly separated or divorced parents; and a relatively small number of widows or widowers. Our models reveal several significant influences of parental marital status on teen behaviour and almost always in the expected direction: children with married parents fare better than their counterparts with cohabiting or divorced or separated parents, though the differences with never-married parents is not great and rarely significant, perhaps partly because the small sample of single parents.

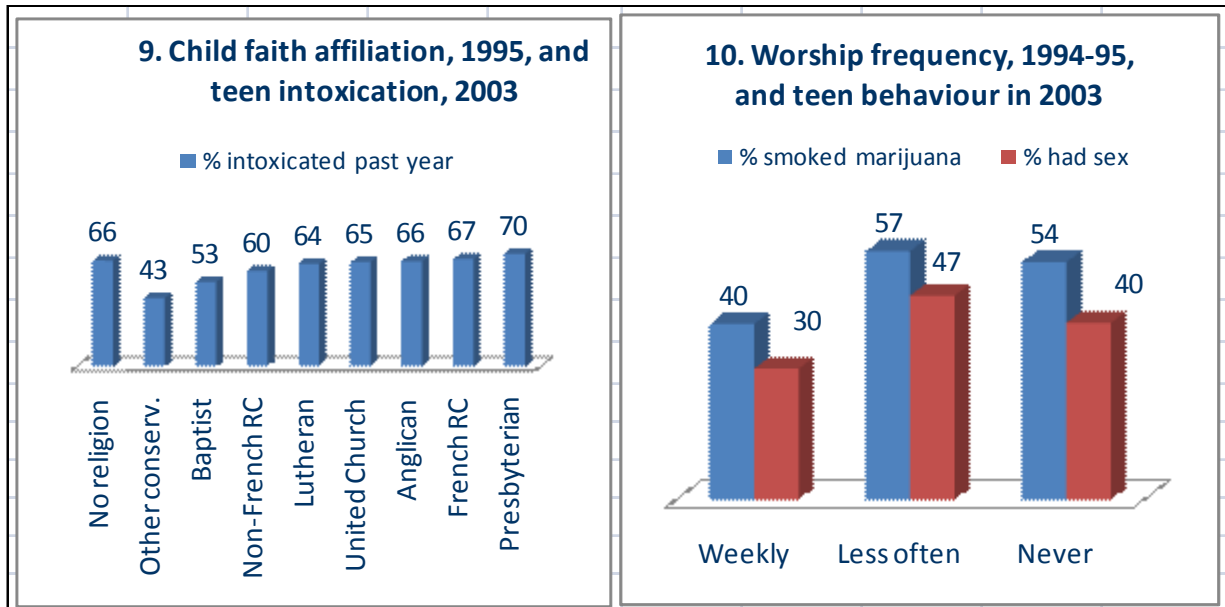
7. Some causes of teen problems are due to **the child's activities** see Chart 7. The frequency of playing computer games when aged 6-11, e.g., may seem harmless, but it does influence the likelihood of selling illicit drugs, using LSD or acid, and damaging other people's things, or vandalism. The percentages of teens reporting these activities are small, but the differences between those who played computer games weekly or less often are big. Boys are more prone to this activity than girls. Playing computer games is negatively associated with teens having a girl/boy friend.



8. Some causes of teen problems are due to **the parent-child interaction**. An example is the parent's perceived influence of their discipline, -- Chart 8. Again, the differences are not great between strict discipline, never letting the child get away with something deserving of punishment, and lax discipline, letting the child get away half the time or more often. But the differences are noticeable and in the expected direction: 46% versus 58% for smoking marijuana for example. Several family variables were examined and this one seemed to be the most important.

9. **Religious affiliation** is another family influence, Chart 9. Children with no religion were expected to have more teen problems than Catholics, liberal Protestants, and conservative Christians. But while conservative Christians (the "other Christian" group) plus Baptists appear relatively free of problems, they still have high rates of intoxication -- 43% to 53%.

The surprise though is that liberal Protestant and French Roman Catholic children when teens had intoxication rates similar to or higher than the religiously unaffiliated teens: 66%, no religion; and 70%, Presbyterian, e.g. In our models the conservative Christian influence relative to the other religions is usually positive. An evangelical faith variable is quite similar: the small samples of Eastern Orthodox and Jehovah's Witnesses are deleted from conservative Christian to form this variable. Parents having a similar religion seemed to help the child also, but these influences were not modeled. The children of non-Christian faiths are too few in the sample to yield many reliable estimates.



**10. Child attendance at church, Chart 10, is important later in life if it is at least weekly: Consensual sex: 30%, among those who attend weekly; and 47%, less often. This is just an average and increases with age. Note that attending less often than weekly as a child seems worse for later teen behaviour than never attending church at all, though the differences are not great. Attendance is a consistently strong predictor of good teen behaviour in our models. We also have estimates of the effect of parent and child attending with the same frequency, presumably together, and also of the child attending more often than the parent, and less often. The first of these three possibilities seem to be best for the future life of the child, and the last worst: the parent attending less often than the child, which implies “do as I say, not as I do”.**

**11. Two key results of behaviour** appear in Chart 11. Most want children to be happy, and optimistic about the future. Parents certainly want that for their children, and civic leaders as well. The teens who were intoxicated in the preceding year were less likely to say they were “very happy” with the way things were going in their life, than were other teens: 36% versus 29%: not a great difference. There is even less difference in the results for being hopeful about the next five years in a teen’s life. A better indicator of well-being may be one which asks about serious concerns. For example, the last thing anyone wants to see is suicide, yet serious consideration of it is very common, as we noted in Chart 4. Teens will say they are happy even if they have felt suicidal in the past year, or have attempted suicide. Christians want children to be converted, though we can have no measure of this – only God knows for sure.

<p><b>11. % of teens very happy; and hopeful about the future: and intoxication</b></p> <p>■ Not drunk ■ Drunk past year</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Not drunk</th> <th>Drunk past year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Very happy</td> <td>36</td> <td>29</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Future very good</td> <td>33</td> <td>28</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Not drunk	Drunk past year	Very happy	36	29	Future very good	33	28	<p>12. It is expected of a young man that he will sow all his wild oats, when young, but the mischief is, that a man who begins sowing wild oats, seldom sows a better kind, in middle life or old age. ... the first principle to be established in the human mind, is reverence for the character and mind of God. <i>The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.</i></p> <p>Noah Webster</p> <p>Two references:</p> <p>Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. <i>Raising children God's way</i>, Banner of Truth: 2007</p> <p>Murray, Andrew. <i>Raising your children for Christ</i>, Whitaker House: 1984</p> <p><b>Heartfelt thanks to our research team: Gordon and Graham Walford, Edward Bukenya, Martha and Promise Sanipe.</b></p>
Category	Not drunk	Drunk past year								
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12. Our **conclusion** contains two quotes from America's Noel Webster, creator of the first American dictionary, the first written before his conversion in 1810 and the second after. Webster is saying we turn out according to our seeds planted when young; or just as Pliny, the Roman writer thought, rabbits become white in winter because of all the snow they eat, silly we realize now, but containing a truth: we are what we consume in childhood. We see abundant evidence for this in our studies, but even our best models predict much less than half of the variation we see among teens – teen sex is one of the easiest to predict, and only 25% of the variation is explained. And that is the reason for the central importance of being born of the spirit, or born again. This is most likely in the childhood and teen years, and so should be the central concern of all Christians. Only with a new and developing nature formed by the Holy Spirit working in us can we hope to avoid the temptations that are so strong in today's culture, and be delivered from the control of the evil one. For even the best of environments and child-parent dispositions are no guarantee of true success in life, though family devotions, prayer, and worship contribute to a solid foundation.

To conclude, here are some wise words from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." The Christian researcher would add "go only as the Holy Spirit leads". And this addition also applies to the words of baseball legend Yogi Berra, who said "If you meet a fork in the road – take it". We would add: -- but only the one guided by the Holy Spirit.