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### **The Problem of Underage Drinking**

*"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." Proverbs 20:1*

For the past sixteen years I have been the coordinator of the Washington County Teen Court; this is a diversion program for Juvenile Court. I receive information and solicitations in the mail and by email for various programs and products related to juvenile crime. I recently received an email from **3rd Millennium Classrooms**, which is one of the leading providers of evidence-based online offender education programs used in the criminal justice system. This email addressed the problems created in our country by underage drinking. In part the email stated:

#### **Can We Afford to Ignore the Problem?**

In 2010, according to the Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center (UDETTC), the cost of underage drinking to U.S. citizens was **\$62 billion**. Per state, this translates to **\$2,070** per youth per year.

Not only does underage drinking contribute to economic problems in the U.S., it is a significant contributor to health and social problems as well. Drunk driving, premature death, serious injury, assault, and property damage are all results of underage drinking. We cannot afford to ignore the problem any longer.

I decided to look specifically at the state of Arkansas with regard to underage drinking and here are some of the things I found on just Arkansas:

Underage drinking cost the citizens of Arkansas \$0.9 billion in 2010. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth. This translates to a cost of \$3,097 per year for each youth in the State or \$4.46 per drink consumed underage. Excluding pain and suffering from these costs, the direct costs of underage drinking incurred through medical care and loss of work cost Arkansas \$318 million each year or \$1.66 per drink. In contrast, a drink in Arkansas retails for \$1.03.

- During 2009, an estimated 23 traffic fatalities and 1,110 nonfatal traffic injuries were attributable to driving after underage drinking.
- In 2009, an estimated 22 homicides; 12,700 nonfatal violent crimes such as rape, robbery and assault; and 21,400 property crimes including burglary, larceny, and car theft were attributable to underage drinking.
- In 2007, an estimated 6 alcohol involved fatal burns, drownings, and suicides were attributable to underage drinking.
- In 2009, an estimated 435 teen pregnancies and 9,826 teens having risky sex were attributable to underage drinking.

It is no wonder that God's word warns us time after time about the problems associated with drunkenness. We should recognize the significant good that Godly principles can bestow on our communities. May God help us to impact the young people in our communities with a Godly influence.

*"For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." Proverbs 23:21*