



"A child's conduct will reflect the ways of his parents."  
—Arnold Lobel

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## Where Are the Parents?

Two recent incidents with Charlotte connections, both involving 18-year-olds, have made headlines and initiated debate over parental involvement and control of their offspring. Perhaps it is a good idea to consider these events ourselves to hone our judgment on such matters.

The first episode appears to be a success story of the first degree. A local beauty, Brooklyn Decker, from the Charlotte suburb of Matthews, North Carolina, finishes high school last summer and immediately sets out for the bright lights and possibilities of New York City. Within a few months, she is modeling for national publications, and soon she lands one of the top modeling assignments in [the world](#): Victoria's Secret. Most recently, she secures another top-model prize when she appears in *Sports Illustrated's* annual swimsuit edition, adding her name to a short list of supermodels like Heidi Klum, Rachel Hunter, and Elle Macpherson, who are also *Sports Illustrated* alumnae. All this fame and success has occurred in just seven months!

But the poses and the scanty attire! Obviously, modeling has become increasingly revealing, and perhaps the foremost peddlers of skin - at least in terms of popular awareness - are Victoria's Secret and *Sports Illustrated*.

Lingerie and bathing suits these days leave little to the imagination, and these are the meager articles of clothing in which young Miss Decker is regularly photographed and displayed in catalogues, magazines, commercials, and other advertisements. Do her parents not mind that every red-blooded male in America sees her like this - not to mention where their carnal minds subsequently drive them?

Not in the least, according to Miss Decker, who was interviewed by a local talk-show host this past Wednesday morning. Her parents are totally behind her and support her every decision. As she says, they think her pictures are "beautiful" and "happy" because they make her happy - "They are definitely not ashamed of it. . . . They're more than proud." Her younger brother, who is sixteen, thinks it is cool that she hangs out with the biggest names in modeling and that he gets to attend some of the parties, where he can take pictures of her new friends to show to his buddies at school. She claims that her whole family revels in her success - but what she does will have no affect on their family values. She will "remain grounded." As for nudity, it depends on the situation; in fact, most of the time, she says, it is "just artistic."

The second incident happened early Sunday morning on Charlotte's I-485, which encircles about two-thirds of the city. Brock Franklin, a high school senior from a prestigious neighborhood, drunkenly drove his vehicle the wrong way along the interstate, and the only thing that stopped him was a head-on collision with another automobile. The two passengers in the latter car died at the scene, and Mr. Franklin lies in a coma at a Charlotte hospital with bleeding in his brain and a lacerated liver. If he recovers, he will be charged with several crimes, certainly driving while impaired and perhaps two counts of manslaughter.

Franklin describes himself as a "redneck that parties with my friends all the time. I enjoy getting drunk and gettin [sic] high," saying that, as he filled in his expletive-strewn MySpace.com profile, he was smoking pot. He lost his father, a Charlotte firefighter, two years ago, and lives with his mother and sister in an affluent section of the city. Yet, despite his sobering loss and his family's need for strength and maturity, everything about him that has been made public portrays him as an out-of-control, self-destructive young man.

Until now, his mother has been publicly silent about him and the accident. How silent was she about his drinking, drug-taking, and partying? Having lost all control, did she just throw her hands up in exasperation and let him run wild? Or was she ignorant of his activities? It is hard to believe she was not aware of his radical behavior. Evidently, she did nothing about it.

It is true that both of these young people are legally adults, but does parental responsibility and care come to an immediate end on a child's eighteenth birthday? Maybe more to the point, the behaviors in question did not suddenly begin on the child's eighteenth birthday but were supported or allowed before then for some time. Evidently, the parents' permissiveness or absenteeism in their children's younger years led to their recent dubious activities. Although the parents would deny it, they essentially let their children grow up on their own. The Bible says - and how true it is! - "A child left to himself brings shame to his mother" ([Proverbs 29:15](#)).

We live in a youth-oriented and -glorifying culture, a fact that blares on our radios, televisions, billboards, Internet sites - everywhere. But young, good-looking, talented, strong, capable, exciting, and fun does not necessarily translate into *wise*. This is where parents should come in. They need to be the moral, ethical, commonsense voice that provides direction and guidance for the energies and aspirations of young people. Yet, for a number of reasons - all of them silly in the final analysis - parents these days seem to be afraid to correct their children. Solomon again provides a pointed proverb: "Chasten [discipline, correct, advise] your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction" ([Proverbs 19:18](#)). Put negatively, if for whatever reason parents fail to guide their children, they are actually dooming them to lifetimes of grief and ruin. This should be incentive enough to try to make a difference!

As for teens, who are going through these difficult times, remember Solomon's sage advice:

Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. . . . The father of the righteous will greatly

rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice." ([Proverbs 23:22](#), 24-25)

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Parenting \(Part 1\): Principles](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

As the Columbine massacre at Littleton, Colorado, revealed, the parenting practices of our people leave a great deal to be desired. Because of our upsidedown emphasis on the youth culture and its characteristic selfishness or self-centeredness, the family is crumbling and deteriorating. Play and work are at the top of our priorities while God and family have moved to the bottom. God, as an active hands- on parent, has placed parenting on the top of His priority list. If we neglect parenting, we place our salvation in peril. Parents have a God- mandated responsibility to train up godly offspring, nurturing them in righteous behavior and basic life skills, spending ample quality time with them. The church is only as strong as its constituent families. The whole purpose of God is family.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Abstaining From Evil](#)**

by John O. Reid

God does not just want us not to sin, He also wants us not even to appear to be doing evil. John Reid shows how Christians must guard their thoughts, words and deeds at all times.

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