

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

42

Dearest Grandchild,

Over fifty years ago I clipped an article about Max Jukes and Jonathan Edwards from a Christian newspaper. The point of the article is that Christian training can make a difference in your family tree. Here is the version of the story from my files.

“Max Jukes lived in the state of New York. He did not believe in Christian training. He married a girl of like character. From this union men have studied 1,026 descendants. 300 of them died prematurely. 100 were sent to the penitentiary for an average of 13 years each. 190 were public prostitutes. There were 100 drunkards. The family cost the state \$1,200,000. They made no helpful contribution to society”.

“Jonathan Edwards - one of the greatest minds God gave to America, lived in the same state. He believed in Christian training. He married a girl of like character. From this union men have studied 729 descendants. Of this number came 300 preachers, 65 college professors, 13 university presidents, 60 authors of good books, 3 United States Congressmen, 1 vice president of the U.S., and barring one grandson who married a questionable character the family has not cost the state a single dollar. The difference in these two families was caused by Christian training in the home and heart conversion”.

Fearing that I had fallen prey to an urban legend, I recently studied a defense of Max Jukes by **Robert Frick Ph.D.** Dr. Frick admits that the statistics about the family of Jonathan Edwards are true and in addition to the information I had, points out that there were “practically no lawbreakers . . . more than 100 lawyers and 30 judges . . . 62 physicians . . . 80 elected to public office . . . 75 army or navy officers, and a U.S. Treasury official.

Dr. Frick, however, takes exception to information about Max Jukes. At the end of his argument, however, he paints a worse picture of the Jukes’ family than the one in my files. Certainly he reveals nothing that would recommend raising a family without Christ and the church. He claims that the original study of the Jukes’ family was done by Richard Dugdale, and published in 1877. Dr. Frick used the 4th edition of this book for his research. Here are some of his “corrections”.

- The family name was Juke, not Jukes, and Edwards lived in Conn. and Mass., not N.Y.
- Max was not an atheist, but a hard drinking, jolly and companionable man averse to steady toil. He had a numerous progeny, some of whom were almost certainly illegitimate.
- Max was not the sole patriarch of the family as 2 of his sons married his sisters.
- Dr. Frick questions the 1,026 number of descendants and states that Dugdale estimated 1,200 Jukes including 169 who married into the family.
- Frick doesn’t know where the number of 100 drunkards came from but admits to 7 murderers in the family. He also quotes Dugdale that there were 280 pauperized adults and 140 criminals in the family.
- Dugdale states that 52.4% of the females were harlots but Frick thinks this is misleading because many of these immoral women were “merely impudent” and not paid.

- Frist also found records of 64 Jukes in the poorhouse and 142 receiving state aid.
- Frist has no idea how many alcoholics were in the family, but is sure that the number 1,146 is wrong. He also points out that the table listing 440 people were not alcoholics, but actually a count of non-Jukes given diseases by prostitutes in the Jukes' family.
- He also states that the number of those sent to jail was not 130, but 140 or 150, but the time served averaged was only 1 year.
- He admits that 300 did die prematurely, but disputes the rumor that 285 had syphilis. He said that only 67 had this evil disease.
- Etc.

The "defense" of Max Jukes by Dr. Frist makes poor old Max look worse than anything I had in my files. It makes me think that Mr. "Juke" might well roll over in his grave and quote the good doctor who "defended" him this old Spanish proverb - "No quiero mas queso, sino salir de la ratonera". It means "I don't want any more cheese, I just want to get out of this mouse trap".

One reason for today's letter is to warn you about following the wrong leaders. Jesus warned that when the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14). I have recently been saddened by rereading about the life and death of Ernest Hemmingway. He was rich, handsome, and famous. He won a Nobel Prize winner, was a cultural icon to millions. He was one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century, and was a personal friend of Fidel Castro. He grew bitter about religion, however, and sarcastically described himself as being raised in a neighborhood with wide lawns and narrow minds. He arrogantly bragged that all thinking men were atheists. Before lining up to follow him, however, it is wise to know where he was going. He was an alcoholic, had mental problems, and apparently cheated on all four of his wives. Sadly, he blew out his brains with a double barreled shotgun. Fortunately God is the judge, and not you or me. I mention him only because I want you to be careful who your heroes are.

Someday, if God wills, you will have children of your own. If God entrusts you with this great responsibility, I pray that you will raise your family like the family of Jonathan Edwards, and not Max Juke.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce