

A few days ago a young basketball player destined for greatness died from an overdose of cocaine. His name was Len Bias, and he had just the day before been drafted in the top round by the champion Boston Celtics. His mother said that his death would be a lesson to the young about the evils of drugs. Perhaps this is true for some. But I think as a general rule it is not so.

Less than a week after this tremendous example, another rising star, a professional football player named Rogers paid no heed at all and also died of a cocaine overdose. Less than week! Now we have twice the example, and it will probably help as little.

I think that the example is clear and cannot be missed. What goes wrong when we try to use it? I think that it is the fact that it happened to someone else. The attitude of the fighter pilots in the book 'The Right Stuff' was that those who crashed made a dumb mistake that they themselves would never make. People who drink or take drugs say, 'That disaster would never happen to me! I am in control of the situation. I won't make a mistake.' They feel that the world is somehow different for them, and it is hard to convince them otherwise.

What can we do about it? I'm not sure that a negative example helps that much for the reasons I've already given. I think that we must show them that there is a better way. We must radiate the constant glow of the joy and majesty of the Christian life, so that when the fireworks display of worldly pleasures dies out, there is something left for them to see by. It is so hard to compete against the advertisement of immediate thrill and instant satisfaction. We must show the greater value of enduring joy, that joy of the best life that can possibly be.

There may be some honest searcher out there tonight who can admit to themselves that they are not in control...