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Nation Failing as Teacher of Morality

YOU don't have to indulge in vices to become their victim. In fact, those who practice bad habits may be fewer in number than those around them who suffer from other people's behavior.

A hotel fire in Houston this month apparently was started by a careless cigarette smoker. He may never get lung cancer from smoking, but 10 other people died of burns and smoke inhalation as a result of his tobacco habit.

Lawbreakers usually suffer from effects of their crimes, even if they aren't convicted and punished by the state. Their relatives frequently suffer even more from deprivation and embarrassment.

Most people regard certain forms of sexual permissiveness as being immoral. Families and friends of practitioners may become co-sufferers with those whose preferences are not socially acceptable. A husband patronizing a prostitute may infect his innocent wife with venereal disease in addition to other pain inflicted.

Gambling is a vice that grows on individuals until the habit becomes

an obsession. It is axiomatic that those who continue to gamble eventually will lose their money. Distress the gambler may experience often is small compared to that his family must undergo as they are deprived of necessities and friction arises.

Pushers of habit-forming drugs probably never tell beginners that they will become slaves to the dope habit, selling whatever they own or can beg, borrow or steal to obtain costly daily "fixes." They never tell them of distress their families may suffer, either.

The public presently is somewhat incensed by drunken drivers, because their habits bring death and injuries to thousands of others, including non-drinkers, each year. New statutes pertaining to this hazard are pending but do we need more laws when we haven't enforced those who have well enough to tell whether they might work?

Again, a person does not necessarily have to be a drinker in order to become a victim of alcoholism. Millions of families are in want be-

cause breadwinners cannot steady jobs due to drinking businesses lose heavily on account of absenteeism and low productivity of drinking employees.

Laws to regulate the legal age for drinking by young people are meaningless as long as they regularly see sports heroes swigging beer on TV and when cocktail parties are their parents' favorite style of entertainment. Children often are tragic victims of alcohol.

The notion that there are such things as "victimless crimes" is fiction and is as misleading as the declaration that "You can't legislate morality." Morality is fundamental, a system of rules of conduct established for the well being of individuals and society.

Nevertheless, laws alone will not bring about a moral society, with high cultural values and ethical goals. Morality must be taught, and that is where our nation is failing.

As a friend used to say: "You can no more teach what you have not learned than you can go back to a place you've never been."