

## TO MY GRANDSONS: SOME ADVICE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

To Brian and Thomas Yarbrough, Zachary and Nicholas Wansley,

In case you are counting, this makes the eighth straight year I have written you with a little grandfatherly advice at the beginning of the New Year. You might be interested to know that this is far and away the most popular column of the year with readers. Many share it with their children and grandchildren, and in some cases, file the column away for future use. I have never asked you what you do with the advice. Maybe it is best I not know.

When I began this correspondence with you, none of you were yet in your teens. Now, two of you are in college. Over the past eight years, you have given up ten-speed bikes and Rollerblades for iPods and MySpace and text messaging. Me? I am still trying to figure out how to answer my cell phone (if that's what you call that gizmo these days). Some things never change.

When I was your age I thought I was bulletproof. You probably feel the same way today. Well, I wasn't, and you aren't either. I promise that the day is going to come when you will realize you can't handle all that life throws at you. That is when you will discover a Higher Power. The more we learn about the universe, the more it becomes apparent that this stuff just didn't happen by accident. I know your dads are science teachers, but take it from me: There is a God. Believe in God. Then find a worship setting in which you feel comfortable. That will be the right place for you.

I am sure there are days you must wonder if anything you are having to learn in high school and college will amount to a hill of beans when you finally enter the workplace. That is the wrong question to ask. The better question is: What kind of work habits are you developing in school today? Whatever you are doing now, you will do on the job. If you slough off homework, you will slough off work assignments. If you give your schoolwork extra attention and effort in order to earn better grades, you will give your job that same kind of attention and effort. No matter what your profession, you will find your career much more rewarding in every respect if you give it your best. The place to learn that is in the classroom.

Your grandmother has often told you that every choice you make — good or bad — has a resulting consequence. That is something people seem to have a hard time understanding these days. If you make a bad choice, don't try to rationalize your way out of it. That is dishonest and dangerous. Accept the consequences of your actions, and then don't do it again. How do you know whether something is right or wrong? Listen to your gut. If something doesn't feel right, chances are good that it isn't.

You have heard this before, but I will say it again. Love your country. There is nothing wrong with being patriotic. I have traveled the globe, and I can tell you that there is no greater place on earth than the United States. I know we have warts, but I am still waiting for someone to tell me a better place to live. The great thing about our country is that we have the power to make it better, if we will get involved. Don't forget that.

You guys are a fortunate bunch. You come from good homes. Your parents love you, and your four grandparents think you hung the moon. You enjoy good health, have bright minds and face a future as good as you choose to make it. Find something you enjoy doing, and make that your life's work. Life is too short to be unhappy.

I leave you with one last piece of advice: Whenever you get behind the wheel of a car, drive as though your life depends on it — because it does. Please be careful.

Love,  
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