

## The Smoking Threat

On this day in 1964, the surgeon general of the United States issued the first official warning that smoking is hazardous to one's health. Cigarette smoking had been growing in popularity in the United States since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as manufacturing advances made smoking more affordable and tobacco companies spent millions of dollars in advertising to entice buyers.

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a number of scientists had accumulated evidence of health threats associated with smoking, including lung cancer, heart disease and lung disease. By the 1970s, the World Health Organization had declared tobacco smoking to be the world's single-most important preventable cause of premature death. In 1971, legislation went into effect banning cigarette ads on radio and television in the United States. Years ago, Life Care declared that all of its facilities would be smoke-free environments in order to protect the health of our residents and our associates.

People often begin smoking because it is considered cool. Years later, many pay dearly for their habit by suffering from lung disease or cancer. Our culture considers many things acceptable that are contrary to God's standards. We are encouraged to "follow our heart" and do what "feels right." What we aren't told is what the consequences may be.

Just because something is acceptable doesn't make it wise. We may go along with what's popular and think we're okay. But human judgment is limited. We can't see the long-term consequences as God can. Every command and instruction in the Bible is there for our protection and wellbeing, not because God likes to lay down rules. If we do not depend on the wisdom of God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit to guide our choices, what we think is all right may turn out to be all wrong.

--Beecher Hunter