What if we are on the wrong track with the extension of hours for the sale of alcohol? Some do not realize the extent of the alcohol problem we face. According to the 10th Special Report to the U.S. Congress by the National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse in 2000, the alcohol problems amounted to roughly $683 for every man, woman and child living in the United States in 1998.

This is hard to fathom, but by the time you calculate the cost of treatment facilities, health care costs, lost productivity due to injury or death, and other items; Gothenburg is presently paying more than $2.4 million per year to subsidize our alcohol costs. The cost of a special election, I’m guessing, would be less than one hundredth of that annual amount and may help us keep some of that money home. I believe it is worth the risk.

Some argue the one hour change is no big deal. In Arizona, a state with large urban centers and vast open rural spaces, saw a 24% increase in death fatalities in five years from alcohol related car crashes when they extended their sales one hour. Detroit/Windsor had a similar experience from a one hour extension.

Is Nebraska headed in the same direction? We are not the only community in Nebraska extending hours. We are extending hours (9-10 hours/week) to sell more alcohol not less. How is more alcohol consumption a part of the solution. Is it not part of the problem?

Nebraska is 14th in the nation for drinking, according to the National Survey on Drug Use. We are 14th in binge drinking as well. In a report given by the same group in December, 2010, Nebraska is now in the top 10 in the nation for drinking and driving. Consider this as well: those living in the rural areas of Nebraska are twice as likely to drink, drive and die on our highways as compared to those in urban areas of the state. It seems to me that we are headed in the wrong direction.

I do agree with equality of hours for our businesses in Gothenburg. I know of no one arguing against this. It is the extension of hours some have found troublesome. As far as equality of hours with other communities is concerned, should we follow a move in the wrong direction?

Why not start something here in Gothenburg that will bless our state? Why not take the lead and influence other communities to do as we do? Why not help turn things around and make Nebraska 41st in the nation rather than 14th? What if we kept part of the $2.4 million home and spent it here? Wouldn’t that be better for everyone? If we influenced others, what could this mean for our state?

Scriptural principle teaches that those who do what they want will believe they are right but those who choose to do what is right are willing to relinquish what they want. This is the secret to success. Self discipline and denial many times leads to prosperity. Indulgence can lead to ruin. These are the values we want our children to learn.

I know we want to do the right thing. But we must inform ourselves. I would be happy to share the little I have learned with any church or community group.

Rev. Rick Rehmert, Gothenburg