

The Recreational Use of Drugs

The purpose of this tract is to give the reader principles from the Word of God which will enable them to make the correct spiritual decision concerning the recreational use of drugs.

It is a Biblical principle that any medicine (drug) which saves or facilitates human life should be used for the benefit of mankind. Jesus stated in Luke 5:31, **“Those who are well have no need of a physician; but those who are sick.”** We know that Jesus would not approve the sick seeking the services of a physician and then not following his directions which would enable them to overcome their illness. Medicines (drugs) which have a legal, scriptural use are often abused when they are used for a nontherapeutic purpose, i.e to prevent, diagnose, treat, or cure illnesses. When a legal or illegal drug is used for the purpose of producing a state of euphoria or intoxication for amusement or fun, it is referred to as the recreational use/abuse of drugs.

According to the *Controlled Substance Act* of 1971 there are five categories of drugs:

- 1) Stimulants – which speed up the central nervous system (Amphetamines, Caffeine, Cocaine, Nicotine, etc.)
- 2) Depressants – which slow down the central nervous system (Alcohol, Barbiturates, Tranquilizers, etc.)
- 3) Hallucinogens – which cause change in perception and consciousness (LSD, MDA, Mescaline, PCP, etc.)
- 4) Narcotics – which lower the perception of pain (Codeine, Heroin, Morphine, etc.)
- 5) Cannabis – which alters mood, thinking, and behavior (Hashish, Hashish oil, and Marijuana.)

While many drugs can be used beneficially, some are often abused. Drug abuse is defined as, “In the United States, a broader term, ‘Drug Abuse’ has been employed to refer to the nontherapeutic use of drugs that produce changes in mood and behavior. Drug abuse generally denotes an excessive intake of drugs, without a physician’s supervision, to produce a state of intoxication” (Richard I.H. Wang, M.D., **Practical Drug Therapy**, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., p. 145).

Today we live in a drug oriented society. In the early 1980’s Americans spent eight billion dollars a year on legal drugs, five billion on prescription drugs, and three billion on over the counter drugs (*“Living in a Drug World”*, **Herald-Citizen**, Cookeville, TN, October 21, 1983). In addition to this America consumes 60% of the world’s illegal drugs, spending 220 million dollars a day for them (CBS, “CBS New Special”, September 19, 1986, “48 Hours on Crack Street”, Dan Rather). The total volume of drug traffic in America is immense, estimated at anywhere from 27 to 110 billions dollars a year (Evan Thomas, *“American’s Crusade”*, **Time**, September 1986, p. 63).

America’s romance with the recreational use of drugs is producing some very tragic results.

Detroit (AP) – a judge rejected a crack user’s plea for leniency and sentenced her to life imprisonment for letting a man rape her 13-year-old daughter to pay drug debts (**Herald-Citizen**, August 30, 1989).

“Guillermo, a newborn at Broward General Medical Center in Ft. Lauderdale, has spent his whole short life crying. He is jittery and goes into spasms when he is touched. His eyes don’t focus. He can’t stick out his tongue, or suck. Born a week ago to a cocaine addict, Guillermo is described by his doctors as an addict himself. Nearby, a baby named Paul lies motionless in an incubator, feeding tubes riddling his tiny body. He needs a respirator to breathe and a daily spinal tap to relieve fluid build-up on his brain. Only one month old, he has already suffered two strokes. Guillermo and Paul are two heirs of America’s deadly romance with cocaine” (**Newsweek**, July 28, 1986).

“One adult in four and one teenager in three has come to believe (?) that drug abuse is the country’s greatest problem... Six in ten teenagers (?) believe it is the greatest problem facing their generation” (**Herald-Citizen**, August 15, 1989).

With all the emphasis being put on drug education and prevention through the various programs “Dare”, “Just Say No Clubs”, “Drug Free Tennessee”, and “Drug Awareness Programs”, drug use among young people continues to rise.

Atlanta (AP) – Smoking and drug use among young people rose last year, reversing a three-year trend, a survey found.

The survey released today by the nonprofit Parents Resource Institute for Drug Education was based on written responses from 212,802 junior high and high school students in 34 states (**Herald-Citizen**, Monday, October 19, 1992).

While we appreciate all the efforts being put forth by various organizations in drug education, these groups miss a foundational point which is necessary to deal with the recreational use of drugs. The recreational use of drugs will create problems in the user's life, destroy the user's ability to function mentally and physically in a productive manner, and put the user at odds with school officials and law enforcement personnel. However, the basic problem is that the recreational use of drugs is wrong because it involves a **MORAL** problem.

The Bible and the Recreational Use of Drugs

When the Christian seeks the answer to the problem of drug abuse (or any other problem) he goes to the Bible for guidance. The Bible is God's inspired Word to man ([1 Corinthians 2:6-13](#); [\[bible 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13\]](#)), furnishing him unto every good work ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)), and granting unto him all things which pertain to life and godliness ([2 Peter 1:3](#)) The Bible, God's Word, will be His standard at the day of Judgment ([John 12:48](#)).

These are ten outstanding Biblical principles which deal with the recreational use (abuse) or drugs.

1.) [Romans 13:1-7](#)

To govern man's life on earth God has set forth a plan of unity for society. Without such, society would be a state of anarchy, chaos, and ruin. From the passage under consideration four important truths are evident:

- Powers (governments) are ordained of God
- Every soul is to be in subjection to these powers
- To resist the powers is to withstand the ordinance of God
- Those who withstand the powers shall receive judgment ([Daniel 4:17,25,32](#)).

While we must obey God rather than man ([Acts 5:29](#)) any action which violates the law of the land is a sin. A Christian cannot engage in any drug traffic which is forbidden by law. The drug scene is associated with lawlessness.

"Miami (AP) – Federal agents have broken a ruthless pot-smuggling ring that killed an informant, bribed Miami and Key West police and trafficked a half-million pounds of marijuana, authorities said yesterday... Their ring operated for at least 10 years, smuggling \$79 million worth of pot and some cocaine... The ring paid bribes totaling \$150,000 to police and other county officials." (**The Tennessean**, Thursday, December 17, 1987)

"Bogota, Colombia (AP) – Gunmen believed to work for cocaine barons kidnapped Colombia's chief prosecutor yesterday and apparently killed him, and radio network reported... Hoyos's body was riddled with bullets. He was found blindfolded and handcuffed, the Caracol reporter said." (**The Tennessean**, Tuesday, January 26, 1988)

"It is hardly surprising that much of the violence in the inner city (New York) is crack fueled. Dealers too young to boast a driver's license have ready access to state-of-the-art firearms: Uzi submachine guns, 357 Magnums, and MAC 10's... Gang shoot-outs caused 387 deaths in Los Angeles last year; more than half the victims were innocent by-standers." (**Time**, May 9, 1988, p. 20)

2.) [Romans 13:13-14](#)

Christians are not on earth to live for the lusts of the flesh, yet the recreational use of drugs is for the very purpose of "getting high" or fulfilling the lust of the flesh. Christians are to seek first the kingdom of God ([Matthew 6:33](#)), and to be a shining example for others ([Matthew 5:16](#)).

3.) [Galatians 5:21](#)

Among the works of the flesh condemned by the apostle Paul is drunkenness. From the Greek *METHE* it is defined as being intoxicated. While it includes intoxication by alcohol it is not limited to this one chemical substance. This term embraces intoxication from any chemical substance. Paul states of those who engage in the works of the flesh, "***...of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.***"

4.) [Galatians 5:20](#)

Another work of the flesh identified by the apostle Paul is sorcery (witchcraft – KJV). From the Greek *PHARMAKEIA* which is defined as, “the use of medicine or drugs, the use of drugs for magical purposes, magic, sorcery.” The recreational use of drugs falls within the scope of this definition (Fritz Rienecker, **Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament**, Zondervan Pub. House, 1976, p. 517)

5.) [Galatians 2:20](#)

Christ is to live in the faithful Christian. This is impossible if the Christians are disobedient to the laws of the land, making provisions to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, intoxicated, or if they violate other principles found in God’s revelation.

6.) [Ephesians 6:1-2](#)

In this passage, as others ([Colossians 3:20](#)), children are admonished to obey their parents. To disobey parents is a sin. ([Romans 1:30](#)). When parents teach and admonish their children to avoid certain business establishments (because drugs are sold on the premises), groups of people (drug users and dealers), and drugs, their love for the children is evident. For children to disobey this guidance given by their parents is a sin. Not only do children sin by disobeying their parents, but they also sin against God because He clearly teaches that children are to be obedient to parents. This disregard for God’s will is a transgression of His will, therefore sin (bible 1 John 3:4).

7.) [1 Corinthians 6:12](#)

A very important principle in God’s Word is that the Christian is to be God controlled ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [Titus 1:1](#); [Romans 1:1](#); [Matthew 6:24](#)). The Christian is not to be controlled by any chemical substance (legal or illegal), food, drink, habit, person, etc. The Christian is God controlled!

8.) [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#)

The Bible teaches that the Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Christian cannot harm his body with ANYTHING, but is to use it to glorify God.

9.) [James 2:8](#)

The Christian is taught to love himself (also [Matthew 22:39](#)). This love is not an egotistical love but a love which considers the value of a human being and desires the very best for that being. One cannot love self while destroying mind and body with drugs.

10.) [Matthew 5:16](#)

The Christian is to love in such a way that men will observe his purity and glorify God. This is not possible when one is using drugs for recreational purposes, violating the teachings of God’s Word. The Christian must follow Christ, walking in the light as he is in the light ([1 John 1:7](#)).

While these principles govern the child of God in the area of drug abuse, they can also be applied to any other problem or question faced by God’s children.

Marijuana Under the Spotlight!

Marijuana (*Cannabis Sativa*), also called pot, grass, reefer, Mary Jane, weed, etc., has been proclaimed by many as a harmless recreational drug. It has been estimated that 50 million Americans have travelled the “high” road by means of Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is the psychoactive or mind-altering drug in marijuana (Oakley Ray, **Drugs, Society and Human Behavior**, p. 419). Federal studies further indicate that approximately 25 million Americans use marijuana on a regular or semi-regular basis, and spent \$8.8 billion on this drug in 1990 (Sam Vincent Meddis, “USA’s Illegal Drug Bill: \$40 Billion” **USA Today**, June 20, 1991).

One thing which has contributed to the wide acceptance and popularity of marijuana in our society was and is a favorable “press” by its advocates. The users of marijuana claim that it is a source of happiness, and avenue to spiritual truth, and the means of bringing love to the world. Research, however, has brought light to the fact that marijuana contains 421 different chemical compounds (**Marijuana and Health**, Eight Annual Report to The U.S. Congress from The Secretary of Health and Human Services, 1980, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Rockville, MD, 9 p. 7). Sixty-one of the chemicals which have been identified in the plant (the cannabinoids) are specific to cannabis. Thus it is a very dangerous drug.

Recent Research Provides the Following Facts

1.) "Marijuana makes learning more difficult. Concentration is harder, and thinking slows down. Studies show that marijuana actually interferes with thinking a memory." (**For Kids Only: What You Should Know about Marijuana**, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, pp. 4 and 5.)

2.) One of the symptoms reported by chronic pot smokers is impairment of short term memory (Peggy Mann, "*Brain and Sex Damage*," **Marijuana Update**, Reprinted from **Reader's Digest**, May 1979, p. 5).

3.) "Special tests can find marijuana's ingredients in the body up to a month after use." (**For Kids Only**, p. 8).

4.) "Marijuana flashbacks – spontaneous recurrences of feeling and perceptions similar to those produced by the drug itself – have been reported. A survey of United States Army users found that flashbacks occurred in both frequent and infrequent users and were not necessarily related to a history of LSD use. Such occurrences may range from the quite vivid recreation of a drug-related experience to a mild evocation of a previous incident." (**Marijuana and Health**, p. 23)

5.) Physiological changes resulting from marijuana use:

- Increase in pulse rate.
- Reddening of the eyes at the time of use.
- Dryness of the mouth and throat.
- Increased work of the heart by increasing the heart rate.
- In some cases it increases blood pressure (Oakley Ray, pp 431, 432).

6.) "Marijuana contains no nicotine but does contain the gaseous ingredients and tars found in tobacco that lead to chronic cough, emphysema, and lung cancer. Endocrine effects may include alteration of ovulatory patterns, lowering of testosterone levels, and gynecomastia. Sperm counts, motility, and shape are affected. The immune system may be compromised. Decreases in intraocular pressure and production of tears, slight papillary constriction, and conjunctival injection are the effect on the eye. Marijuana may cause alteration of the blood pressure, tachycardia, precordial pain, and decreased exercise tolerance in adolescents. The chief concerns about marijuana, however, are its effect on the brain and behavior. Marijuana leads to short term memory loss, decreased attention span, and perceptual changes that may lead to school and driving problems" (Donald Ian MacDonald, M.D., "*Drugs, Drinking, and Adolescence*" **AJDC** – Vol. 138, February, 1984, p. 118).

7.) In the fifth revised and augmented edition of **Keep Off The Grass**, Pride board member, Dr. Gabriel G. Nahas, reports the latest scientific and medical evidence of the damaging effects of marijuana in man. These include prolonged memory deficits in adolescents; persistent disruption of ability to perform complex tasks; increased prevalence of schizophrenia; impairment of immunity; development of lung, neck, and head cancer in young adults, damage to human fetal development; and increased evidence of childhood leukemia after maternal use of marijuana (Robert Baird, M.D., "*Is Marijuana Really All That Bad?*" **Listen**, p.6).

8.) Dr. Donald Ian MacDonald, a former official in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, points out an often overlooked danger of marijuana. "Marijuana is often the gateway drug for other illicit drug use, specifically cocaine and heroin. Studies show that among those who reported using marijuana only three to ten times, more than 20% have gone onto try cocaine; and for those who reported using marijuana more than one hundred times, almost three-quarters (73.4 percent) have tried cocaine ("*Should Marijuana Be Legalized?*" Haven Bradford Gaw, **Sheriff**, March-April, 1991, p. 43).

9.) "The government says Americans suffering from AIDS, cancer, and glaucoma can't use marijuana to ease their plight. Officials say the drug might make them sicker... The decision was made by the Public Health Service primarily because of fear that the smoked marijuana would be harmful to people with compromised immune systems." (**The Tennessean**, Wednesday, March 11, 1992)

The Christian and Marijuana

The Christian, a new creature in Christ ([II Corinthians 5:17](#)), is governed in all phases of his life by the Word of God ([John 14:15](#)). If the Christian uses marijuana he violates Biblical principles and sins ([I John 3:4](#)).

To grow, possess, smoke, or sell marijuana is against the law. In the state of Tennessee simple possession (1st conviction) may be punished by 11 months and 29 days in jail and a fine up to \$1,000. If convicted of possession of over ½ oz. of marijuana, punishment may be 1 to 5 years in prison and a fine up to \$3,000. Disobedience to the laws of the land violates [Romans 13](#). A Christian cannot be a part of the “pot” generation and be a faithful child of God.

One who smokes marijuana harms his physical body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit ([1 Corinthians 6:19](#)), and this falls into the same category with those who abuse their bodies with alcohol, tobacco, or any other substance or act which destroys God’s temple.

There are other principles which are violated failure to set a godly example for others to follow ([Matthew 5:16](#)), in some cases, disobedience to parents ([Ephesians 6:1-2](#)), lack of proper respect (love) for self ([Matthew 22:39](#)), and for parents who set the improper example for their children, the lack of parental love ([Ephesians 6:4](#) ;[Titus 2:4](#)) and possibly a failure to provide the physical necessities of life ([1 Timothy 5:8](#)).