

Smoking And Tobacco Use

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The consumption of cigarettes in the United States has tapered off in the last several years. After peaking at 634 billion cigarettes in 1982, it was down to about 430 billion in 1999 (Trends in cigarette smoking, "Table 1: Cigarette consumption, United States, 1900-1999). This 430 billion would be approximately 1720 cigarettes per every man, woman, and child in the United States. The dangers of cigarette smoking and the use of tobacco have long since been documented. The people in the world that use tobacco will all readily admit that it is bad for them to use tobacco, especially to smoke. They will continue to do it because it gives them, at the very least, momentary pleasure or it "relaxes them". Although many use tobacco, many have quit because of the health hazards of using tobacco. There is no "safe" tobacco. Philip Morris U.S.A., the nation's largest cigarette producer, makes this statement at the beginning of its list of tobacco ingredients: *"There is no such thing as a "safe" cigarette and we are not pointing out that the ingredients are used in or occur in food in order to imply "safety" with respect to any brand of cigarettes"* (Philip Morris, U.S.A., "Tobacco ingredients ...", p. 1).

To help us understand the dangers of using tobacco, let us note some of the results of several studies that have been done in this area:

1. "Chronic exposure to smoke may curb the development of a child's lung function ... Parental smoking repeatedly has been linked to an increase in middle ear fluid, a sign of chronic ear disease ... Seventy-five percent of all young people who smoke come from homes where one or both parents smoke." (Patient Newsletter, Little Rock Allergy Clinic, p. 2)
2. Ulcer surgery patients live an average of 9.1 years less than the average person. This was not related to the surgery, but to their smoking. (Arkansas Democrat, "Ulcer surgery patients ...", p. 5A)
3. Adults who smoke are 53% more likely to have been divorced than those who do not smoke. (USA Today, "Smoke and marriage ...", p. 1D).
4. Over 9000 people die each year due to oral cancer. The risk is not reduced by switching from cigarettes to other forms of tobacco. (American Dental Association, p. 1).
5. Children of parents who smoke have an increased rate of breathing infections (Springfield Daily News, "Parents who smoke ...")

6. Cigarette smoking can reduce your night vision, reduces the size of your visual field, and causes irritation of the eyes (American Optometric Association, p. 2).
7. Smoking causes cardiomyopathy, a condition that leads to heart failure and could kill a person (Springfield Daily News, "Study links smoking ...").
8. Smoking has long been known to increase the risk of lung cancer. It is the number one cause of lung cancer. (American Lung Association,, pp. 2-7).
9. "Approximately 46 percent of fatal coronary disease and 54 percent of non-fatal heart attacks in women can be attributed to cigarette use (Arkansas Democrat, "Study shows increase in risks ...").
10. Among the Amish, traditionally non-smokers, there is almost no lung cancer or lung disease (Arkansas Gazette, "'Passive smoking,' ...").
11. Dixie Youth Baseball has rules that forbid the use of tobacco by anyone within the playing field, and forbid sponsors who promote tobacco products (Dixie Youth Baseball, pp. 45,46).

The use of tobacco products causes or attributes to emphysema, lung disease, and cancers of just about every portion of the body – mouth, larynx, throat, stomach, lungs, etc. Smoking causes over 500,000 deaths a year in the United States. This is more than are killed in automobile accidents or by that dreaded illness, AIDS. In all the years of fighting in Vietnam, the United States lost around 55,000 soldiers and support troops. It would take 10 Vietnams to equal what cigarettes do to the United States in one year.

While extremely dangerous to mankind, people still use tobacco. Tobacco is addictive and very difficult to quit. Because of its dangers, many have switched to other tobacco choices. Their hope is to reduce the health risks caused by the use of tobacco. Does this really work?

The addictive agent in all tobacco is nicotine. Pure nicotine is highly dangerous. If all the nicotine in a single pack of cigarettes were extracted and injected directly into a person, it would kill him. Nicotine gives the tobacco user the same high as those who use morphine or cocaine (Springfield Daily News, "Nicotine can arouse ...", p. 1B). The addiction caused by nicotine can make quitting smoking harder than quitting some hard drugs. Nicotine gives the smoker his "lift" in the morning, but can cause drowsiness later in the day. This is the reason that smokers have to continually smoke throughout the day.

Many have switched from regular cigarettes to cigars, low-tar and nicotine cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and snuff in order to help reduce the risks from smoking. The problem with this logic is that "tobacco is tobacco is tobacco". The ingredients in tobacco, including nicotine, are still there. With cigars, people have determined that they cannot be as bad for you as you puff them and do not have to inhale them as you do cigarettes. However, this is still burning tobacco and it still increases the risk of oral cancers of all sorts, as well as lung cancer, emphysema, etc. Over a century ago, Horace Greely said a cigar is a "fire at one end and a fool at the other" (Time, p. 69).

Low tar and nicotine do not help either. While they reduce the intake of these two ingredients through the filter, it has been noted that people smoke more of these cigarettes because of the need for more nicotine. Also, people have been known to close up the holes in the filter on these cigarettes in order to get more tar and nicotine. Because low tar and nicotine lose some of their

flavor, flavor enhancers have to be added. Again, we are back to ingredients that become carcinogens (cancer causing agents) when burned.

Smokeless tobacco increases the risk of a pre-cancerous condition called leukoplakia. Smokeless tobacco contains several carcinogens, and causes damage to the gums and bones that support the teeth. Also, smokeless tobacco contains high levels of grit and sand that can cause uneven wear of the teeth (American Dental Association, "Smokeless Tobacco", pp. 2,3).

Cigarette smoking is the most popular form of tobacco use in the United States. In order to better understand cigarettes, I went to the Philip Morris U.S.A. website and this is some of the information contained on that site:

1. There are 115 ingredients that go into cigarettes. While not all are used in any one brand, all of these are used somewhere in the brands produced by Philip Morris U.S.A. Two processing aids used are carbon dioxide and ethyl alcohol. This company has an almost 51% of the market share in the United States in the cigarette market.
2. Besides the ingredients in the tobacco, there are 9 ingredients in the cigarette papers; 6 ingredients in the sideseam adhesive; 32 ingredients used in the monogram inks; 12 ingredients used in the filtration materials; 49 ingredients used in the filter papers; and 16 ingredients in the filter adhesives.
3. Philip Morris U.S.A. points out that many of these ingredients are found in every day foods, yet reminds us that this does not make cigarettes safe. (Philip Morris U.S.A., "Tobacco ingredients ..."; "Non-tobacco components list").

While the ingredients in cigarettes may seem harmless, we have to remember that when a cigarette is set on fire, many of these seemingly harmless ingredients become dangerous to our health. It has been noted that there are over 4000 toxic substances in cigarettes. The following is a list of some of these:

Arsenic: found in rat poisons
Acetic Acid: found in hair dye developer
Acetone: found in nail polish remover
Ammonia: found in household cleaners
Benzene: found in rubber cement
Butane: found in lighter fluid
Cadmium: found in batteries
Carbon monoxide: found in car fumes
Carbon Tetrachloride: found in dry cleaning fluid
Ethanol: found in alcohol
Formaldehyde: used to embalm dead bodies
Hydrazine: found in rocket fuel
Hexamine: found in barbecue lighters
Hydrogen Cyanide: found in poison gas chambers
Lead: found in batteries
Methane: found in swamp gas
Methanol: found in rocket fuel
Naphthalenes: found in explosives

Phenol: found in disinfectants and plastics
Polonium: found in radiation
Staeric Acid: found in candle wax
Tar: found in roads
Tuluene: found in embalmers glue
(What's in a Cigarette?, p. 1)

Many have been impressed with the recent court rulings and the large tobacco settlement. All this settlement did was to give people a reason to keep the tobacco industry alive. While it seems like the tobacco industry lost, in order for them to fulfill their end of the settlement, they will have to stay in business for, at least, the next 25 years (Nicotine Victims.com, p. 1).

As Christians, we must examine the use of tobacco in light of what the Bible teaches. All that we do must be by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17) and to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). What does the Bible teach that relates to our subject matter?

1. The use of tobacco is sin because it is not taking care of our bodies. Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. We are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19). One cannot take care of one's body and use tobacco in any form.
2. The use of tobacco is sin because it is not presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1,2). Are we offering our spiritual best when we destroy our bodies and endanger others by our use of tobacco? (Remember that second-hand smoke is harmful to others in the area.)
3. The use of tobacco is sin because it does not present the image of one who is walking in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21). The world knows the use of tobacco is wrong. They argue their right to do so based on freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution. They do not argue that it is right to use tobacco based on any evidence from Scripture. Many that I have talked to know they will have to quit using tobacco if they become Christians.
4. The use of tobacco is sin because it does not show that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). The commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves is called the "royal law" by God (James 2:8). One cannot fulfill this law when one destroys self, thus bringing pain and sorrow to loved ones. One cannot fulfill this law when endangering the lives of others (second-hand smoke).
5. The use of tobacco is sin because it is addictive. Matthew 6:24 teaches us that no man can serve two masters. He will hate the one and love the other. Those who use tobacco are in the service of the tobacco, thus keeping themselves from being in service to God. One who says that he is not in service to the tobacco, then let me challenge you: "STOP YOUR USE OF TOBACCO NOW. PUT IT DOWN AND WALK AWAY FROM IT!" Few have ever quit by just stopping. In our stores, we see stop smoking kits, patches, gum, etc. to help people quit smoking. Whether people will admit it or not, they are "owned" by their tobacco.
6. The use of tobacco is sin because it is not placing God and his kingdom first in our lives (Matthew 6:33). God will never accept less than our best (Colossians 3:23). The tobacco user takes away his health and therefore his ability to serve God. The tobacco user will crave his tobacco more than his love for God. The tobacco user that is a Christian will twist

scripture or make excuses in order to “justify” his practice. This is not how we as Christians should handle God’s word (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

One of the arguments used to provide some “defense” in favor of using tobacco is that it is no worse than caffeine consumption and overeating. While it is the case that the Christian must watch his intake of caffeine and that obesity is harmful to our health, does this “justify” the use of tobacco? This is one of the weakest forms of argument to try to prove something to be right. This argument is really a case of admitting that what we are doing is wrong. We are comparing our deed to something that we believe to be wrong. By saying it is no worse than something else, we are actually stating that what we are doing is equal to something we believe to be wrong. Therefore, our deed is wrong. Two wrongs have never made a right. Rather than try to justify something by something else, we need to examine Scripture and put everything to the test. We need to then remove from our lives all things that are contrary to scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The use of tobacco is sin. Some time back, I saw a saying that should help those who smoke to decide the proper course of action to take towards the use of tobacco:

“WHERE DO YOU WISH TO SPEND ETERNITY – SMOKING OR NONSMOKING?”

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