

## Combating Worldliness – Drinking and Drugs

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Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2). It is God's desire that we have a good life. Good health is the cornerstone of a good life. This cornerstone is laid upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. One who follows Christ is set for the opportunity of good health and a good life. In the Apostle John's statement we find a link between prosperity and good health and the prospering soul. The prospering spiritual man is the measure of earthly prosperity. Often times the question is asked, how much money is too much money for the child of God? My answer has always come from this verse. When possessions possess the man the soul suffers and that is too much money even if it is ten dollars. But what about a lifestyle that causes the soul to suffer? Would it not also be sinful? It is often the case that what causes the soul to suffer also causes harm to our physical body. No one who uses drugs, outside of a prescribed medical usage, escapes the damage done to both body and soul.

God has demanded that we work (Ephesians 4:28). We are admonished to get instruction (Proverbs 4:1, 13). Husbands are to lead the home and train the children (Ephesians 5:23, 6:4). Wives are to guide and keep the home (Titus 2:4). Children are to receive instruction and obey the parents in that which is good (Ephesians 6:1). These roles and relationships can best be fulfilled without the detrimental effects of illicit and abused drugs.

It is within the parameters set by the life of Jesus to say, never use illicit drugs or abuse drugs intended for proper medical use. Remember that even when Jesus was tortured on the cross that He refused wine mingled with gall. Often times the gall was the bitter mixture of anesthetic drugs that would dull His pain but it would also cloud His mind. No one can say that Jesus died on the cross in a drug-induced cloud of confusion. He knowingly paid the price of atonement for each of us. He endured every particle of pain the cruel cross could inflict.

There is also the autonomy of the individual that must be considered. We each must live before God in obedience to receive the reward of eternal life for ourselves. It is written, no man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). We must serve God (Joshua 24:15). Whenever anyone gives themselves to an addictive substance, outside of prescribed medical use, they are submitting to this agent and rejecting God. When one is enslaved to nicotine, or any other addictive substance, they relinquish their autonomy. They now bow to a substance unable to control themselves. They sacrifice health, good life, prosperity of body and soul as they serve a substance above the living God of heaven who made them. Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3).

There are legal drugs that are addictive and unlawful by the word of God. Man has made them legal and they remain so because of the great revenue they generate. Smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages are the two main vehicles of legal drug traffic in this age. Neither of these is a disease within itself but they enslave the body and lead to many true diseases. These diseases dull and shorten the life leading to a premature death.

## Smoking

One person dies every six and one-half seconds, 4.9 million people per year, from smoking. This is expected to double in the next twenty years (Cage). In 1964 the Surgeon General Report concluded one thing Smoking Kills! Forty years later the twenty-eighth report is clearer. It states:

- Smoking causes disease in nearly every organ of the body at every stage of life. Toxins go wherever the blood flows.
- Risks for certain cancers increase in proportion to the number of cigarettes smoked and the number of years one has smoked. (Smoking is now linked to over ninety percent of lung cancers).
- Smoking is a major independent cause of coronary disease.
- Smoking, at any age, damages the lungs.
- Smoking harms every phase of reproduction.
- Smoking increased the risks for eye disease.
- Smoking increased the risks for loss of bone mass.
- Smoking increased the risks for peptic ulcers.
- Smoking affects the immune system. It contributes to infections after surgeries and complications of diabetes (Carmona).

Smoking is a vehicle for hundreds of poisons and noxious substances, the chief of which is nicotine. Nicotine attacks the body in these ways:

- Prompts the adrenal glands to pump out adrenalin
- This causes a sudden release of glucose
- This increases blood pressure, respiratory functions (breathing), and heart rate.
- Suppresses insulin output (causing hyperglycemia).
- Releases Dopamine in the brain (the pleasurable feeling)

-Continued use develops tolerance (more nicotine needed to cause the same good feelings)

-Cessation causes withdrawal syndrome (irritability, craving, cognitive and attention deficits, sleep disturbances, and increased appetite).

Sixty milligrams of nicotine is lethal. Vomiting, tremors, convulsions, and paralysis precedes death. There is one hundred twenty five milligrams of nicotine in one five gram cigar or five one gram cigarettes. Smoking and inhaling this size cigar or number of cigarettes will put eleven and one-half grams and two grams respectively into a person blood stream. In actual practice it will take more than six cigars to kill a person because the body is very effective in eliminating nicotine for a short time. There was a published report in 1932 by a German scientist named Kiefer about a person dying immediately from smoking. This man smoked forty cigarettes and twelve large cigars in twelve hours. This equals about two hundred thirty milligrams of nicotine absorbed into his system. The kidneys kept eliminating nicotine until the intake exceeded the rate at which the kidneys worked and when the sixty milligrams accumulated in his system he was graveyard dead (Steinhaus and Grunderman 5).

Today youth have found Bidis. They come in various colored packaging and various flavors such as cinnamon, orange and chocolate. They smoke these instead of ad American brands of cigarettes. The trouble is that these unfiltered cigarettes from India have twenty eight percent more nicotine in them than the regular cigarettes (Leshner). According to the above example, smoking eighty of these, four packs, in twelve hours will kill you.

The body gives you an opportunity to live. God made it and He wants you to have life abundant now and eternal life! Smoking can shorten your life by ten whole years. One-half to two-thirds of all people who start smoking in their youth will die from a smoking related illness. Researchers report that a person who quits smoking at age sixty will regain three years of life; stop at forty and gain nine years of life; stop by age thirty and almost all increased risks are removed (Wardell). So some smart teen will reason that he will e cool and smoke as long as he quits by age thirty and there is no harm WRONG. Chronic exposure to nicotine results in addiction (Leshner). Ninety percent of those who try to quit relapse in one week. Only five percent succeed alone. Again the teen may reason that smoking a ow tar or ow nicotine cigarette will be safer. The Surgeon General reports that there is no benefit to these so-called ow tar and ow nicotine cigarettes (Carmona). Abstinence is the only real preventive. Twenty five million Americans alive today will die prematurely unless they quit smoking!

The following quotation is taken from a letter by Thomas A. Edison April 26, 1914. Edison was wrong on his theory concerning the real danger but he was right on the preventive measure. Edison wrote:

The injurious agent in cigarettes comes principally from the burning paper wrapper. The substance thereby is called creosol. It has a violent action on the nerve centers, producing a degeneration of the cells of the brain, which is quite rapid among boys. Unlike most narcotics this degeneration is permanent and uncontrollable. I employ no person who smokes cigarettes. (1)

(I found this humorous addition attached to Edison quote in an old sermon outline by an unknown preacher but I have not been able to verify it belonging to him. In my opinion there are enough degenerates in the world without manufacturing them by cigarettes - RLM).

### Drinking Alcohol

Fifty one percent of the American population consumes more than twelve alcoholic drinks per year. Twenty nine percent drink four to five drinks per day, which is at alcoholism level (Carmona). The drug, alcohol, is dangerous when abused for its destructive effects upon the body. People cease to work and find themselves lying in the bed, if fortunate, turning like a door upon its hinges. It is as Solomon warned:

The slothful [man] saith, [There is] a lion in the way; a lion [is] in the streets. [As] the door turneth upon his hinges, so [doth] the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in [his] bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. The sluggard [is] wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason. (Proverbs 26:13-16)

But the greater destruction to young lives lies in the ability of alcohol consumption to dull the senses and lead them to use other drugs in combination with it! The more heavily one abuses alcohol, the more likely they are to use illicit drugs as well. In 2001, two thirds of American teenagers, ages twelve to seventeen, who participated in frequent drinking binges also abused drugs. In contrast, only one in twenty teens who did not drink at all used drugs (Volkow).

It should be obvious to all that a pregnant woman should never put a poisonous drug in her body unless medically necessary. One must realize that nothing is obvious to a ruddy Babies suffer permanent damage being victimized by drinking mothers during pregnancy. The following permanent damage is proven to such newborns:

- Nerve damage to arms and legs
- Mental retardation
- Birth defects (New Study)

In the event that a person who abuses alcohol and other drugs desire to get treatment to stop, they usually will receive treatment for only one category of abuse. In time they will drop out of this treatment because they continue the other form of drug abuse that has not been recognized or treated. It has well been said, rug and alcohol abuse wreak incalculable damage on individuals, families, and communities (Volkow).

### **Party Drugs**

Ecstasy is defined, in its primary meaning, as an overwhelming feeling of great happiness or joyful excitement. It is a shame that we now have a third definition in the dictionary that defines ecstasy as an illegal amphetamine-based synthetic substance with an euphoric effect (Soanes). The Greek term from which this word springs literally means to stand outside oneself. This illegal, illicit drug is called a party or club drug. That sounds like fun. This deceptive idea is emboldened by the immediate effects in most people. They feel warm emotionally, mentally stimulated, have a sense of well-being, empathy toward others and decreased anxiety. Others though immediately are affected the opposite way feeling anxious, agitated, and reckless. A person's health is in immediate danger using MDMA or Ecstasy, as a party drug. These symptoms and dangers are not nausea, chills, sweating, involuntary teeth clenching, muscle cramping, blurred vision, high blood pressure, faintness, panic attacks, loss of consciousness, seizures, hyperthermia, muscle breakdown, dehydration, and heart failure (Volkow).

Now think about the dangers of this drug when mixed with alcohol and other drugs! The street obtained formulas for Ecstasy have been found to contain other substances such as Methamphetamine, Caffeine, Dextromethorphan, Ephedrine, and Cocaine (Volkow).

Though the United States Drug Enforcement Agency banned the drug in 1985, placing it on the list of Schedule I drugs with no proven therapeutic value, over ten million people in America have used Ecstasy at least one time (Volkow). Today about five percent of high school seniors use Ecstasy. Seventy seven percent of emergency room patients, due to the use of Ecstasy, were twenty five and under. These drugs kill our young people.

### **Date Rape Drugs**

When anyone, but especially our young adults, drink, dance and party to be sociable they are placing themselves in grave danger. Drinking alcoholic beverages alone causes one to not think clearly, lose inhibitions to sexual advances and lose consciousness which makes one vulnerable to everyone. The greater danger is that there are drugs that are forcibly used against you that will incapacitate you and cause memory loss. These drugs are used to sexually assault you (that is the politically correct term the term rape is more illustrative of this event). These drugs are known as date rape drugs. I worked for a number of years as a first line crisis counselor with rape victims in the city of Las Vegas. I have seen hundreds of these cases. Each one, and every one, were heart rending and destructive in the victim lives. Every victim suffered extreme guilt, though falsely

perceived. Shame and fear invade their lives. Am I pregnant? Do I have AIDS? Are there pictures of this event? How many people saw me and assaulted me? Sometimes the victim wakes up to view the event but the body will not respond to stop the assault. Victims lose the ability to make the simplest of decisions because they have had their control of self and life wrenched from their possession.

These drugs are secretly added to the victim drink. In the drink they are invisible, without taste and without aroma, although GHB will leave a salty taste. All are indiscernible to the senses until after one has lost and regained their senses. But it is too late then. Precautions include: Do not drink alcoholic beverages, do not accept an open drink container, do not share a drink, never drink a beverage that you have not kept in your immediate possession. It is always cheaper to buy another drink.

Aside from the obvious effects of unconsciousness there are serious problems that can develop by ingesting these drugs: low blood pressure, hallucinations, memory loss, aggressive and violent behavior. Gammahydroxybuterate , GHB, is sometimes a home made substance with the ingredients bought through the internet. Even worse, some recipes call for ingredients such as Drano and common toxic cleaning supplies. Rohypnol, roofies or roach, are imported from Mexico and have no regulated consistency of potency per tablet. Will you be the one to get the fatal dose? Some of these drugs are used in third world countries for anesthetic and memory loss drugs used in surgery. Be vigilant, alert, watchful and not a victim.

### **Methamphetamine**

Another drug that is destroying the minds and bodies of people in rural America is Methamphetamine, a potent psychostimulant. Meth has already coursed its way through the cities of America leaving a wake of dead and dying and now is a growing concern in the rural areas. When I visited some small towns in which I had worked in the past I was warned by a dear friend that I would witness the land of the walking dead! Meth users are thin, hollow faced, pale, unhealthy in appearance and agitated in movement and speech. There were so many of old acquaintances that were given to its use that it did appear as I had been warned!

Methamphetamine is known as speed, chalk, ice, crystal, crank and glass. It is odorless and bitter tasting. It is highly addictive! One receives an initial rush effect and then the central nervous system is attacked. One may feel a sense of well being, very active, a loss of appetite, high agitation and possibly very violent behavior. As the names foretell, there are many ways to ingest Meth in its many forms: orally, injected, smoked, snorted. This stimulant is used in a binge and crash pattern (Hanson). The euphoria is very satisfying but short lived. It subsides while the chemical is still in the blood stream. More is ingested to keep the euphoric feeling and the chemical compounds build up in the blood. This continues until the body crashes. Tolerance is built up quickly causing the need for more chemical to get and maintain the desired altering of mood. The physical appearance is obtained because of the increased activity and extended

wakefulness coupled with a loss of appetite. Continued use has toxic effects on nerve terminals in the brain. High levels can elevate body temperature to dangerous, sometimes lethal, levels as well as cause convulsions (Hanson). This drug also causes a variety of cardiovascular problems.

Keep in mind that Methamphetamine is manufactured in garage laboratories by chemists most of whom could not pass a high school chemistry course! The ingredients can be obtained over the counter. Chemicals are mixed and cooked becoming very unstable, usually in residential neighborhoods. How many garages, houses, sheds and barns have you heard of being blown apart by an unexplained explosion in the last few years? What good sense does it make to take a substance so manufactured and inject it in your blood?

## Marijuana

MJ, Reefer, Mary Jane, Weed, Reefer, Grass, Pot Marijuana is still the nation's most commonly used illicit drug. More than eighty three million Americans (thirty seven percent) age twelve and older have tried marijuana at least once, including fifty percent of seniors in high school (Hanson). Marijuana can be placed in foods, made into tea, smoked in cigarettes called joints, smoked in water pipes called bongos, and cigars called blunts. Blunts are made when the tobacco is removed from a cigar being replaced with marijuana and a little crack cocaine added. One must factor in the fact that today marijuana is about five times as potent as it was in the seventies! Therefore we note that marijuana can produce adverse physical, mental, emotional and behavioral changes and contrary to popular belief it can be addictive (Hanson). Marijuana can: harm the lungs, impair short term memory, verbal skills, judgment, distort perception, weaken the immune system, increases the potential to develop cancer, impairs the development of adolescents. Yet many want to make marijuana legal and easily obtainable!

Again, marijuana is frequently used with other drugs. Used alone in moderate doses marijuana has been shown to impair driving performance. When even a low dose is combined with alcohol the effects are markedly greater (Hanson). In high doses it is toxic leading to a delusional state and a loss of personal identity.

Remember how God wants us to live peaceful, pleasant and productive lives. Then observe the facts concerning life of a marijuana user. Students who smoke marijuana consistently get lower grades in school. Workers who use marijuana have more problems on the job: increased absences, tardiness, accidents, workman compensation claims and job turnover. Workers who use marijuana at home manifest more withdrawal behavior at work: leaving work without permission, daydreaming, spending work time on personal matters, shirking tasks, decreased productivity and morale (Hanson). Daily life has plenty of potential problems to face. These are made worse by the effects of marijuana use: Depression, anxiety, personality disturbances, reduced capacity to gain intellectual, job and social skills, and reduced memory. Research has shown that marijuana adverse impact on memory and learning can last for days and weeks after the acute effects of the drug wear off (Hanson).

Women, think about your baby before it is conceived. Do not impair the development of your reproductive system by using marijuana in your youth, or at any time. Babies whose mothers smoked marijuana during pregnancy display altered responses to visual stimuli, increased tremulousness, and a high pitched cry, which may indicate problems with neurological development. These same babies during infancy and pre-school years have more behavioral problems, more trouble performing tasks of visual perception, language comprehension, sustained attention and memory. In school, these children are more likely to exhibit deficits in decision making skills, memory, and the ability to remain attentive (Hanson). They start off a little behind and by the time they are seniors in high school they can be far behind their peers. God said that He knew Jeremiah before He formed Jeremiah in his mother womb. The verb formed entails a process like a potter forming an object from clay. Much effort, plan and design goes into the project. Wayne Jackson asked a piecing question that we all need to ponder, an one destroy what God is in the process of making (Jackson 7)? Women, what gives you the right to interfere in that process?

### **Anabolic Steroids**

Young people you have a responsibility before God to take care of your body. It is your temporary home. It is God workmanship. Young men want to look uffed as they train with weights. Young girls want to be slim and trim. These are good within themselves. But how many of these try to attain these goals by the use of drugs? That condemns that which was formerly good. Young men use anabolic steroids to grow muscle mass and improve their performance in sports. Young women use these drugs to reduce body fat and bulk muscles. These drugs are ingested orally, injected in the veins, or rubbed on the skin by way of gels and creams. The dosages used to this end are usually ten to one hundred times the dose that would be used for a legitimate medical condition (Leshner). Some tack take two or more different anabolic steroids. Some use veterinary products! The adverse side effects range from the physically unappealing to the life threatening. Think fully about the following lists of potential risks of the abuse of anabolic steroids:

- SKIN acne, cysts, oily scalp
- MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM Short stature, tendon rupture
- HORMONAL SYSTEM

Men breast development, shrinking of the testicles, infertility

Women excessive growth of body hair, enlargement of the clitoris

Both Genders male pattern baldness

- INFECTION HIV / AIDS, hepatitis

- LIVER peliosis hepatitis, cancer
- CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM heart attacks, enlargement of the heart left ventricle
- PSYCHIATRIC EFFECTS homicidal rage, mania, delusions

### **Bring Glory To God**

God has designed us to be fully functional and happy without the introduction of drugs into our systems. We should think, research and count the cost before ingesting these substances, even for a medical condition. We are to be good citizens (Romans 13). Good citizens do not break the law by taking illegal substances. We are to bring glory to God in the church (Ephesians 3:21). Christians follow Christ. Christ Jesus refused a narcotic even in the face of death. He faced temptations common to us all (Hebrews 4:15). We know that He did not sin but do we recognize that He lived fully without depression, pills, booze, cigarettes, and drugs? His meat was to know and do the will of His Father in heaven (John 4:34). Go ye and do likewise.

It is a pleasure to combat worldliness as a Christian, unless it is in the Lord church! Our responsibility is still to fight it and keep the church pure (1 Corinthians 5). Yet it is a hard fight to combat worldliness in our own brethren. Paul talked about Timothy as his son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2). He trained Timothy to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Imagine how Paul would have felt to learn that Timothy had been overtaken by the world, by sin, and now would have to combat the worldliness in him! I have seen that circumstance. I have trained men to preach the Gospel. I remember one man that I taught and baptized with his wife. He wasted no time in studying so he could teach others. After a short period of six years he has converted many to Christ. He had preached in various congregations and had a great reputation as a faithful Christian and Gospel preacher. You could always count on him to be involved in the work. He was my joy and my crown (Philippians 4:1). Then one year he seemed to be divided in mind. His productivity started declining. He mistreated his family. He spent the family money on others by deceit. He started lying about large and small things. He blamed others for all his problems. Do you recognize the problem yet? Yes he was addicted to narcotic drugs. He was abusing a prescription drug. He even stole his wife prescription for a pain medicine and went on vacation leaving her in severe pain. Brethren, quit ye like men (1 Corinthians 16:13). Fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). Do not be like the dog that returns to his own vomit (Proverbs 26:11; 2 Peter 2:22). Be like the sheep that lies down safe in the fold of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18). It is pleasant to be clean and free in Christ. While we live let us bring glory to God in the church, world without end (Ephesians 3:21).

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