

Christlike Thinking in This World

Alcohol | Tobacco | Marijuana | Smoking | Vaping

Adult Training Seminar Session 13, Daniel Arcilla, 12-22-2019

"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:5)

Question: How do we form a biblical worldview on alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, smoking, vaping?

1) STEP 1: HUMBLE YOURSELF.

🗣️ **Discuss:** Why is it important to have humility in regards to these subjects?

- The Bible doesn't directly address any of these topics except for alcohol.
- The subject matter itself can be very complex, nuanced, and contradictory.
- State and federal laws sometimes conflict and are evolving.
- There are Christians with differing opinions on these things.

If we rely on the law, the culture or people, we'll get mixed messages. So we need God's Word.

2) STEP 2: SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

Activity: Are the following mentioned in the Bible, church, or the world? (Circle one for each)

Alcohol - World | Church | Bible

Tobacco - World | Church | Bible

Marijuana - World | Church | Bible

Smoking - World | Church | Bible

Vaping - World | Church | Bible

*** Of the subjects above, the only one directly mentioned in the Bible is: _____

A. The Bible on Alcohol

POSITIVELY. The Bible does not condemn alcohol.

1. Some Bible passages have a positive view of alcohol (wine).

- Wine is wished upon people as a blessing (Gen 27:28, Prov 3:10).
- Wine was given to *"gladden the heart of man"* (Psa 104:14-15).
- Wine was recommended by Paul to Timothy for his stomach issues (1 Tim 5:23).

2. Jesus probably drank wine.

- Jesus created ultra-fine wine to be served at a party (John 2:1-11).
- Jesus may have drank wine, as he was accused of being a drunkard in contrast to John the Baptist: *"The Son of Man came eating and drinking..."* (Mat 11:19).
- Jesus apparently drank wine at the last supper and plans to drink it in the future: *"I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"* (Mat 26:27-29; Mark 14:23-25; Luke 22:17-18).
- Jesus prescribed wine in the ordinance of Communion (1 Cor 11:25).
- Jesus, however associated drunkenness with sin & foolishness (Luke 12:45).

Some theologians claim that the wine of NT time was not as strong as wine we have today and okay to drink, but even if this is true, the New Testament still warns against getting drunk with wine. If the NT wine was too weak to get drunk from, then why the warning?

NEGATIVELY. For the most part, the Bible contains warnings against the abuse of alcohol:

1. The Bible clearly condemns drunkenness.

- *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit," Ephesians 5:18*

- “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. (Romans 13:13)
 - “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor 6:9-10)
 - “For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.” (1 Peter 4:3)
2. **The Bible strongly warns against the evils of alcohol abuse:** (Prov 23:20-35, Isa 28:7-8). Too much can lead to all manner of bad things: **Shame** (Gen 9:21, Lam 4:21, Pro 20:1, Rom 13:13), **Staggering and falling** (Job 12:25, Psa 107:21, Isa 24:20) **Poverty** (Pro 23:21), **Vomiting** (Isa 19:14, Jer 25:27), **Ruin** (Eze 23:33), **“Date Rape”** (Hab 2:15), **Woe** (Isa 5:11-12, 22), **Hell** (Gal 5:19-21).
3. **The Christian is to be controlled by the Spirit, not alcohol** (Gal 5:16-24).

The Bible seems to permit alcohol but forbid drunkenness. Why? It is a matter of control. The Christian is called to be controlled by Holy Spirit, not by a substance. Drunkenness is considered a deed of the flesh, leading to a lack of self-control. Christian should shun this for it can lead to sin and even condemnation if left unchecked (Gal 5:19-21). Case in point, many Christians believe that excess drug use can lower inhibitions and open the door to **demonic oppression**. This makes sense, given the Bible's take on drugs.

B. The Bible on Tobacco and Marijuana

The Bible never mentions tobacco or marijuana by name. However, it does seem to speak of drugs in general.

- **Galatians 5:19-20**, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery [Gk. pharmakeia], enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions..."
- **Revelation 18:23**, "...for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery [Gk. pharmakeia]."

Per several Bible dictionaries, this Gk word spoke of drugs used in the practice of sorcery. One dictionary defines

*“φάρμακεία **pharmakeía**, “a drug, which in the Gr. writers is used both for a curative or medicinal drug, and also as a poisonous one. Pharmakeía means the occult, sorcery, witchcraft, illicit pharmaceuticals, trance, magical incantation with drugs (Gal. 5:20; Rev. 9:21; 18:23; Sept.: Ex. 7:22; Is. 47:9, 12).”¹*

*“**pharmakeía**...originally referred to medicines in general, but eventually only to mood-and mind-altering drugs, as well as the occult, witchcraft, and magic. Many pagan religious practices required the use of these drugs to aid in the communication with deities.”²*

With this in mind, some of the same biblical principles that the Bible provides for alcohol may be applied.

C. The Bible on Smoking/Vaping

The Bible never mentions smoking/vaping as we know it. They are activities for consuming tobacco and alcohol. What you consume, whether food or drugs seem to be a function of health. **What is God's will for us regarding our health?**

3) STEP 3: IDENTIFY BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS.

A. A Biblical theology of...plants?

- **God created plants for food and health** (Gen 1:11-12, 29, Ezekiel 47:12, **Rev 22:2** “in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for healing of the nations.”)
- **Food and plants are morally neutral.**
- **Although natural and good, food and plants can be abused.**

¹ Zodhiates, Spiros. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000.

² John Macarthur Study Bible commentary on Galatians 5:20

- Another aspect is that nature is under a curse (Romans 8:19-22).

B. The Apostle Paul's view on "health"

- **Philippians 1:22-26** – What does Paul see as the main purpose for his "health?"
- **Romans 12:1-2** – What is God's purpose for your body?
- **1 Cor 6:12-20** – What does Paul say to those who think the body is only for the physical?

C. The Lord Jesus Christ: view on "health"

- **Luke 22:19** – What does Jesus view as the purpose of His body?
- **Matthew 26:39** – What is the attitude of Jesus regarding His impending suffering?

D. God's will for your mind and body

What is God's will regarding your mind and body?

1. **Be sober-minded**, especially if you want to be a leader (1 Cor 15:34; Rom 12:3; 1 Thess 5:6, 5:8; 1 Tim 3:2, 3:11; 2 Tim 4:5; Titus 2:2; 1 Pet 1:13, 4:7, 5:8).
2. **Practice self-control** (1 Cor 7:5-9, 9:25; Gal 5:23; 2 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:8; 2 Pet 1:6).
3. **Treat your body as set apart for holiness** (1 Cor 6:18-20).

☛ **Discuss:** Do alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana allow you to be more or less sober-minded & self-controlled, lead to more or less immorality? More or less righteousness?

E. The Big Picture: We're aiming for more clarity, not less.

As Christians, our goal in life is to behold the unadulterated glory of God (Ps 27:4). To know God in the most undiluted, undistorted way possible (1 Cor 13:12, Phil 3:8-11). Sin has distorted our vision, making us unable to discern the true glory of God (Eph 2:1-5, Col 2:13, 2 Cor 4:4). However, when we are saved by Christ, the Holy Spirit awakens us to the reality and beauty of God (2 Cor 4:6).

What about caffeine? Is it comparable to marijuana and other drugs?

"...drugs do, in some sense, "work" (even those that are illegal). The question is, how do they work? Do they bypass normal processes? Do they blunt people or exhilarate them to the degree that they do not grow, develop, and mature normally? Do they bypass the normal processes of maturation and make a person something they are not? Do they give the appearance of helping when, in actuality, they have blunted a person's basic responses? This is, of course, what alcohol and illegal substances do. The research indicates this is exactly what prescribed psychiatric drugs do as well."

Steve Fernandez, Jesus and the Depressed, p. 18-19.

F. All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful (1 Cor 10:23)

☛ **Discuss:** Is doing cannabis more helpful or harmful to our goal to seeing Christ more clearly as Christians? To doing God's will in this world?

G. Don't cause others to stumble.

As Christians, we are not to do anything, even liberties at the expense of people around us. **Rom 14:21** "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles."

4) STEP 4: SEEK COUNSEL. (Proverbs 4:7, 11:14, 19:8)

"Where there is no guidance, people fall, but with the abundance of counselors there is victory."

5) STEP 5: RECORD YOUR FINDINGS AND DISCUSS WITH OTHERS.

☛ **Discuss:** What are some similarities and/or differences between alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, vaping? How do these affect your decision-making process?

6) STEP 6: DISCERN FACTS VS. PROPAGANDA.

One of the key aspects of approaching this issue as a Christian is "weeding" through all the messaging.

A. Discern messages from the world.

🗣️ **Discuss:** What messages from the culture do you hear about marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol?

What about the term: “medical marijuana?”

B. Discern messages from the church.

🗣️ **Discuss:** What messages from the church do you hear about marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol? Legality. Cannabis and alcohol. Spurgeon and cigars. Are these legitimate arguments?

7) STEP 7: HOLD TO YOUR CONVICTIONS.

Romans 14:23: “But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.”

8) STEP 8: PRAY THROUGH THE PROCESS.

Libertarianism vs. Legalism

🗣️ **Discuss:** What is the balance between legalistic teetotalism and sinful licentiousness?

9) STEP 9: APPLY GOD’S TRUTH TO YOUR LIFE.

🗣️ **Discuss:** How do we make decisions with regards to Christian liberties and grey areas?

- **Will it profit me or others? Will it build up or tear down?** (1 Cor 6:12, 10:23)
- **Will it bring me under bondage?** (1 Cor 6:12)
- **Will it cause me or another to stumble in their walk with God?** (1 Cor 8:9-13, 10:24)
- **Will it draw people closer or away from God?** (1 Cor 9:19-23)
- **Will this ultimately bring glory to God?** (1 Cor 10:31)

Conclusion/final thought

Consider how Jesus did not self-medicate on the Cross by refusing the sour wine to dull his senses. He wanted to be fully lucid, to drink the full cup of God’s wrath.