

Marijuana: Can Christians Smoke It?

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I. The properties and effects of marijuana

1. Definitions

- A. Marijuana - 1. a. A preparation of the hemp plant, *Cannabis sativa* (see Cannabis), for use as an intoxicating and hallucinogenic drug; usu. applied to a crude preparation of the dried leaves, flowering tops, and stem of the plant that is generally smoked. (Oxford English Dictionary)
- B. Cannabis - 1. Common hemp, *Cannabis sativa*, a tall erect herb of the family Moraceæ having long dentate leaves on long petioles and common in central Asia and other warm regions; different regional varieties, occas. distinguished as *Cannabis americana*, *Cannabis indica* (Indian hemp), etc., are cultivated for their fibre, their intoxicating properties, or the oil obtained from their seeds. 2. (Orig. *ellipt.* for *Cannabis sativa* or (esp.) *indica*.) Any of various preparations of different parts of the hemp-plant which are smoked, chewed, or drunk for their intoxicating or hallucinogenic properties and were formerly used medicinally; bhang (marijuana), ganja, and charas (hashish) are different forms of these preparations and there are many other names. (Oxford English Dictionary)

2. Wikipedia has the following to say about Marijuana:

- A. "Cannabis, also known as marijuana and by numerous other names, is a preparation of the Cannabis plant intended for use as a psychoactive drug or medicine. The main psychoactive part of cannabis is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC); it is one of 483 known compounds in the plant, including at least 84 other cannabinoids, such as cannabidiol (CBD), cannabinol (CBN), and tetrahydrocannabivarin (THCV). Cannabis is often consumed for its mental and physical effects, such as heightened mood, relaxation, and an increase in appetite. Possible side-effects include a decrease in short-term memory, dry mouth, impaired motor skills, red eyes, and feelings of paranoia or anxiety. Onset of effects is within minutes when smoked and about 30 minutes when eaten. They last for between two and six hours." (*Cannabis*, [Wikipedia](#), 11/16/2015)
- B. "Cannabis has psychoactive and physiological effects when consumed. The immediate desired effects from consuming cannabis include relaxation and mild euphoria (the "high" or "stoned" feeling), while some immediate undesired side-effects include a decrease in short-term memory, dry mouth, impaired motor skills and reddening of the eyes. Aside from a subjective change in perception and mood, the most common short-term physical and neurological effects include increased heart rate, increased appetite and consumption of food, lowered blood pressure, impairment of short-term and working memory, psychomotor coordination, and concentration." (*Cannabis*, [Wikipedia](#), 11/16/2015)
- C. "A 2013 review comparing different structural and functional imaging studies showed morphological brain alterations in long-term cannabis users which were found to possibly correlate to cannabis exposure. A 2010 review found resting blood flow to be lower globally and in prefrontal areas of the brain in cannabis users, when compared to non-users. It was also shown that giving THC or cannabis

correlated with increased bloodflow in these areas, and facilitated activation of the anterior cingulate cortex and frontal cortex when participants were presented with assignments demanding use of cognitive capacity. Both reviews noted that some of the studies that they examined had methodological limitations, for example small sample sizes or not distinguishing adequately between cannabis and alcohol consumption. A 2011 review found that cannabis use impaired cognitive functions on several levels, ranging from basic coordination to executive function tasks. A 2013 review found that cannabis users consistently had smaller hippocampi than nonusers, but noted limitations in the studies analyzed such as small sample sizes and heterogeneity across studies. A 2012 meta-analysis found that the effects of cannabis use on neurocognitive functions were "limited to the first 25 days of abstinence" and that there was no evidence that such use had long-lasting effects." (*Cannabis*, [Wikipedia](#), 11/16/2015)

3. Dr. Daniel G. Amen, M.D., a clinical neuroscientist, had the following to say about marijuana usage and its effect on the brain in his book *Change Your Brain Change Your Life*.
 - A. "Many teenagers and young adults believe that marijuana is safe, despite a number of studies demonstrating cognitive, emotional, and social impairment with chronic or heavy usage." (Daniel G. Amen, *Change Your Brain Change Your Life*, p. 236)
 - B. "SPECT [single photon emission computed tomography] has been used to study both the short-term and long-term effects of marijuana on the brain. These studies report that inexperienced marijuana smokers had an acute decrease in cerebral blood flow and that chronic marijuana users had overall decreased perfusion when compared to a nonusing control group. In performing many SPECT studies on marijuana abusers I noticed decreased temporal lobe activity that was not mentioned in the above studies, most likely because of the lesser sensitivity of the SPECT resolution in older scans." (Daniel G. Amen, *Change Your Brain Change Your Life*, p. 237)
 - C. "This study was consistent with previous studies mentioned above demonstrating that frequent, long-term marijuana use has the potential to change the perfusion pattern of the brain. While prior studies showed global decreased brain activity, I found focal decreased activity in the temporal lobes. (This may be accounted for by the increased sophistication of the imaging camera used.) Abnormal activity in the temporal lobes has been associated with problems in memory, learning, and motivation -- common complaints of teenagers (or at least their parents) and adults who chronically abuse marijuana. Amotivational syndrome, marked by apathy, poor attention span, lethargy, social withdrawal, and loss of interest in achievement have been attributed to marijuana abuse for many years." (Daniel G. Amen, *Change Your Brain Change Your Life*, p. 239)

II. The legality of smoking marijuana recreationally

1. Recreational smoking of marijuana is currently illegal in Minnesota.
2. Trends of legalization in States

- A. Though marijuana is still illegal according to federal law, many States (23 as of 2014) have legalized medical marijuana and a few states have legalized recreational marijuana.
- B. The trend is toward legalization in the US.

III. Can a Christian smoke marijuana recreationally?

1. Members of the churches I pastor will not smoke marijuana recreationally for the following reasons:
 - A. Marijuana is an intoxicant (see [Section I](#)), and therefore consuming it falls under the prohibition of drunkenness.
 - i. Drunkenness is a sin for which a church member must be excluded from the church (**Gal 5:19-21**).
 - a. Drunkenness - The state of being drunk; intoxication; the habit of being drunken or addicted to excessive drinking.
 - b. Intoxication - 1. The action of poisoning; administration of poison; killing by poison; the state of being poisoned; an instance of this. Obs. exc. *Med.* 2. The action of rendering stupid, insensible, or disordered in intellect, with a drug or alcoholic liquor; the making drunk or inebriated; the condition of being so stupefied or disordered.
 - ii. Marijuana usage is forbidden because it has an effect "such like" (**Gal 5:21**) drunkenness.
 - iii. All marijuana is not created equal, having varying levels of THC.
 - a. Marijuana has different effects on different people and is not as predictable as alcohol.
 - b. An average sized man can have one drink of alcohol (one normal beer or glass of wine) on a full stomach and not experience intoxication or drunkenness.
 - c. I am not convinced that this is true of smoking marijuana.
 - iv. Christians are supposed to gird up the loins of their minds and be sober (**1Pe 1:13**).
 - a. Gird v. - 1. *trans.* To surround, encircle (the waist, a person about the waist) with a belt or girdle, esp. for the purpose of confining the garments and allowing freer action to the body. Chiefly *refl.* or *pass.*; also, after Biblical phrase, *to gird one's loins, reins*, etc. Also *to gird up, about*.
 - b. Sober *adj.* - I. 1. a. Moderate, temperate, avoiding excess, in respect of the use of food and drink; not given to the indulgence of appetite. 2. a. Not addicted to the use of strong drink; habitually temperate in, or abstaining from, the use of alcoholic liquor; abstemious. 3. a. Free from the influence of intoxicating liquor; not intoxicated; not drunk. Also *fig.*
 - c. To gird up the loins of the mind and be sober is to remove mind-altering influences from our lives so that our minds can think and act freely.

- d. One does not gird up the loins of his mind by smoking a blunt.
- v. Christians are supposed to be sober minded (**Tit 2:6**).
 - a. We are to be sober, watching, and praying (**1Pe 4:7**).
 - b. How much watching, prayer, and Bible reading does a stoner do?
 - c. In order to resist the devil, we must be sober and vigilant (**1Pe 5:8-9**).
 - (i) Vigilant - 1. Wakeful and watchful; keeping steadily on the alert; attentively or closely observant.
 - (ii) A person who is stoned on marijuana, is not sober and is certainly not vigilant.
 - (iii) Rather than elevating a Christian's vigilance and watchfulness, smoking marijuana lowers his inhibitions and opens him up to being tempted by the devil to sin.

B. Marijuana is illegal.

- i. Christians must obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake (**1Pe 2:13**).
- ii. Recreational use of marijuana is banned by the laws of Minnesota.
- iii. We must disobey laws that conflict with God's laws (**Act 5:29**), but this is not such a law.

C. Christians are supposed to abstain from all appearance of evil (**1Th 5:22**).

- i. Smoking marijuana has an appearance of evil to most godly people.
- ii. What would decent people think if they came to a church get-together and we were passing a joint around?

D. Marijuana usage can adversely affect employment.

- i. Christians must provide for themselves and their families, and to not do so makes one worse than an infidel (**1Ti 5:8**).
- ii. Many companies have a zero tolerance policy for drug use and conduct employee drug tests.
- iii. If marijuana usage causes a loss of employment, and therefore the inability to provide for one's self, then smoking marijuana becomes a sin for another reason in addition to it causing intoxication.

E. Marijuana usage diminishes productivity and increases idleness.

- i. Christians are not supposed to be slothful in business (**Rom 12:11**).
- ii. Christians are supposed to be diligent (**2Pe 3:14**).
 - a. Diligent *adj.* - 1. Of persons: 'Constant in application, persevering in endeavour, assiduous', industrious; 'not idle, not negligent, not lazy.'
 - b. How many diligent pot-heads do you know?
- iii. Christians are supposed to be earnestly contending for the faith (**Jud 1:3**).
 - a. Earnestly *adv.* - In an earnest manner; in a manner indicating earnestness.
 - b. Earnest *adj.* - 1. Of persons: Serious, as opposed to trifling; usually in emphatic sense, intensely serious, gravely impassioned, in any purpose, feeling, conviction, or action; sincerely zealous. Of feelings,

convictions, etc.: Intense, ardent. Of actions or words: Proceeding from or implying intensity of feeling or conviction.

c. How many stoners do know that earnestly contend for the faith?

F. Christians are to do all things to the glory of God (**1Co 10:31**).

- i. Can you get high or stoned to the glory of God?
- ii. Can you smoke weed in good faith?
- iii. If not, then it's sin (**Rom 14:23**).

G. As your pastor, I must give an account of your souls to God (**Heb 13:17**) and I must hold a good conscience (**1Ti 1:19**).

- i. Based on my own experience, and the experience of other wise men of God whom I highly regard, I must forbid church members from smoking marijuana because it has intoxicating and mind-altering effects.
- ii. I must also forbid it based on the other reasons just given.
- iii. If it is commonly known that a member of this church is smoking marijuana, they will be excluded from church membership for intoxication (drunkenness) (**Gal 5:19-21**).
- iv. This is my call as your pastor. If you don't like my apples, don't shake my tree.

2. What if recreational marijuana becomes legal in Minnesota or in any State where a church member lives?

- A. The legalization of marijuana would only remove one of the reasons for which I have prohibited the use of it in the churches that I oversee.
- B. Therefore, even if marijuana is legalized, it will still be forbidden to members of churches that I pastor.
- C. Fornication and a whole host of other sins are legal, but they are still forbidden in this church.
- D. We ought to obey God rather than men (**Act 5:29**).

IV. Can a Christian smoke or ingest medical marijuana if it is legal in their State?

1. Marijuana does have medicinal uses.
2. "Cannabis is used to reduce nausea and vomiting during chemotherapy, to improve appetite in people with HIV/AIDS, to treat chronic pain, and help with muscle spasms. Its use for other medical applications is insufficient for conclusions about safety or efficacy. Short-term use increases minor adverse effects, but does not appear to increase major adverse effects. Long-term effects of cannabis are not clear, and there are concerns including memory and cognition problems, risk for addiction, risk of schizophrenia among young people, and the risk of children taking it by accident. The medicinal value of cannabis is disputed. The American Society of Addiction Medicine dismisses medical use because of concerns about dependence and adverse health effects. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) states that cannabis is associated with numerous harmful health effects, and that significant aspects such as content, production, and supply are unregulated. The FDA approves of the prescription of two products (not for smoking) that have pure

THC in a small controlled dose as the active substance." (*Cannabis*, [Wikipedia](#), 11/16/2015)

3. Medical marijuana is legal in Minnesota.
4. "On May 29, 2014 Governor Dayton signed into law a bill establishing a medical marijuana program in Minnesota." (*Medical cannabis in the United States*, [Wikipedia](#), 11/16/2015)
5. If a doctor prescribed marijuana to a church member for a medical problem and it could be used in quantities that would not cause intoxication, then I would consider allowing it.
6. The same rules would apply to medical marijuana as would apply to a pharmaceutical drug.
7. No drug (pharmaceutical or natural) should be taken that would cause intoxication, unless it was to save life or to spare a person from agonizing pain (**Pro 31:6**).

V. Objections

1. Alcohol is worse than marijuana, so why do you allow church members to drink alcohol, but not use marijuana?
 - A. Drinking alcohol in moderation is not forbidden in scripture (**1Ti 5:23; Psa 104:15; Jdg 9:13**), and therefore it is not forbidden in this church.
 - B. But drunkenness is forbidden in scripture (**Eph 5:18**), and is therefore forbidden in this church.
 - C. Smoking marijuana causes mental and physical impairment and intoxication (see [Section I](#)) and is therefore prohibited for the same reasons that drinking excessive alcohol is forbidden.
 - D. It is true that drinking excessive alcohol is far more intoxicating, dangerous, and harmful to someone's health, but that doesn't mean that getting high on marijuana should be allowed, even if it is the lesser of two evils.
 - E. Comparing drinking one beer and not becoming intoxicated, and smoking a joint and becoming intoxicated is not a valid comparison.
 - F. The prohibition is on intoxication, not necessarily on the substance that is being consumed.
2. Marijuana is a plant that God made which grows naturally, so we should be able to consume it.
 - A. So are opium and hallucinogenic mushrooms.
 - B. But that doesn't make it okay to consume them.
3. What if a person has smoked marijuana for years and can now do so without being intoxicated.
 - A. Even if this is possible, it still doesn't justify using it.
 - i. If the person no longer becomes intoxicated on marijuana, then they should have no reason to continue using it.
 - ii. The fact that they are still using it suggests that they are still becoming intoxicated from it.
 - B. An alcoholic who has built up a high tolerance can drink a six pack of beer per day and not become intoxicated.

- C. A person in such a case is addicted to alcohol or marijuana and is destroying their health.
- D. Harmful addictions should be broken.
- E. If you can't stop doing a certain habitual thing (surfing the internet, video gaming, shopping, playing a sport, gambling, etc.) or using a certain substance (alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, coffee, pain medication, sleeping medication, etc.) without having withdrawal symptoms, you are addicted to that activity or substance.
 - i. Addiction *n.* - 1. *Rom. Law.* A formal giving over or delivery by sentence of court. Hence, A surrender, or dedication, of any one to a master. 2. a. The state of being (self-)addicted or given to a habit or pursuit; devotion. b. The, or a, state of being addicted to a drug (see addicted *ppl. a. 3b*); a compulsion and need to continue taking a drug as a result of taking it in the past.
 - ii. Addicted *ppl. adj.* - 3. a. Self-addicted (to a practice); given, devoted or inclined; attached, prone. b. Dependent on the continued taking of a drug as a result of taking it in the past; having a compulsion to take a drug, the stopping of which produces withdrawal symptoms.
- F. To be addicted to anything is to allow it to have power over you.
 - i. The Bible teaches that we are not to be brought under the power of anything, even lawful things (**1Co 6:12**).
 - ii. We must keep under our body and bring it into subjection, including our brain which is prone to get addicted to dopamine, not let it control us (**1Co 9:27**).
 - iii. Keep - *v.* 56. keep under. *trans.* To hold in subjection or under control; to keep down.
 - iv. Sin must not be allowed to *reign* (to have power, sway, or predominance; to prevail or be prevalent) in our bodies (**Rom 6:12**).
 - v. We must not *yield* (to hand over, give up, relinquish possession of, surrender, resign) our body to sin and let it have *dominion* (the power or right of governing and controlling; sovereign authority; lordship, sovereignty; rule, sway; control, influence) over us (**Rom 6:13-14**).
- G. Addiction is a form of what the scripture calls *inordinate affection* (**Col 3:5**).
 - i. Inordinate *adj.* - 1. Not 'ordered'; devoid of order or regularity; deviating from right or rule; irregular, disorderly; not regulated, controlled, or restrained.
 - ii. Affection *n.* - II. Of the mind. 2. a. An affecting or moving of the mind in any way; a mental state brought about by any influence; an emotion or feeling.
 - iii. According to the definitions, an *inordinate affection* is a moving of the mind or a mental state brought about by an unregulated, uncontrolled, or unrestrained influence.
 - iv. If a habit or a substance has an influence on your mind that you are not able to restrain or control (in other words, you have an addiction to it), you have an *inordinate affection* for that habit or substance.
 - v. Inordinate affection is a sin which we are to mortify (**Col 3:5**).
 - vi. This means that we should mortify addictions in our lives.