

Drugs and the Bible



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1. WHAT IS A DRUG?

A drug is any substance (solid, liquid or gas) that when administered to a person will have an effect on them, whether good or bad.

Some commonly used drugs that have good effects on people include antibiotics, Panadol[®], Nurofen[®], aspirin etc. Other commonly known drugs that have bad effects on people include cocaine and heroin. So drugs are not just substances that harm people but are also substances that help people.

1. What other drugs do you know of? What effects do they have on people?

2. What positive and negative effects can drugs have on:

▪ Family relationships and friendships

▪ Work and school

▪ Concentration (driving, working etc.)

▪ Finances

▪ Health

3. What drugs have you taken? What effects did you experience?

4. What drugs have your friends or family taken? What effects did they experience?



2. DRUGS AND THE BIBLE

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT DRUGS

1. List and discuss at least 3 things the media, movies, music or the internet say about drugs.

2. List and discuss at least 2 things your friends and family tell you about drugs.

3. Do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the statements below? Circle your answer and discuss your decision.

	AGREE	DISAGREE
a) Some drugs can be used for both good and bad reasons.		
b) Prescription drugs are just as dangerous as illegal drugs.		
c) It's OK to use drugs as long as I don't hurt anybody.		
d) It's OK to use drugs if you use a clean syringe.		
e) All drugs should be legalised.		

WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT DRUGS

The Bible doesn't mention the words "drugs", "smoking", "marijuana", "antibiotics" etc. The main drug it talks about is alcoholic drinks such as wine. We'll look at alcohol and wine in a bit more detail later. Since the Bible doesn't specifically mention every drug, we need to look at Biblical principles that will help us understand what we should do with drugs.

1. The human body

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Who owns your body? What does it mean to glorify God with your body?

How could you better glorify God with your body?

- Read 2 Corinthians 7:1

What should you protect your body from? How does this apply to drugs?

How do you take care of your body? In what ways can you improve?

2. Treating sickness

Since God is all-powerful, he is able to heal any disability or sickness we have (Exod 15:26; Mark 1:29-34; Phil 2:25-27), and Jesus and his followers healed many people without the use of medicine but by the power of God (Mark 1:29-34; Acts 28:7-9). Since God loves us, he wants us to pray to him about any problems we face in life, including sickness (Phil 4:6-7; Jam 5:13-16). We must have faith that God will heal us when we ask him to (Mat 9:27-31; Jam 5:14-15), however not all prayer for healing will be answered by God (2 Cor 12:1-10; 1 John 5:14-15). The Bible tells us that we will all physically die, showing us that God will not always heal us (2 Kings 13:14,20; Rom 5:12).

However, God also allows us to use human solutions to treat sickness, but he doesn't want us to rely only on human solutions (2 Chr 16). How do the following verses show that God allows us to use human solutions like drugs (medication) to treat sickness?

- 2 Kings 20:1-7

- Luke 10:30-37

- 1 Timothy 5:23

3. Our character

- Read Galatians 5:16-25

Write down the behaviour that God condemns (v.19-21).

As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit in us who helps us obey God. Verses 22-23 show that the Holy Spirit displays “fruit” or good qualities in our lives. Write down the fruit that he shows in us.

Many drugs can create effects in us that God condemns and that are opposite to the fruit of the Spirit. Which drugs do this and what are their effects?

- Read 1 Peter 4:7

What 2 characteristics should we have? Why?

- Read 1 Peter 5:8-9

What 2 characteristics should we have? Why?

Do some drugs cause opposite effects to the characteristics mentioned in the two passages from 1 Peter? If so, which drugs?

4. Addiction

Drug use can lead to **psychological** and **physical** addiction.

- **Psychological addiction** occurs when a person uses a drug regularly because of the satisfaction they get from it. They like the effects the drug gives them so they want to keep using it. All drugs can lead to psychological addiction.
- **Physical addiction** occurs when, in order for the body to work properly, it needs the person to keep taking the drug. This happens when drugs are regularly taken, causing the body to adjust itself to deal with the side effects of the drug. When the drug is stopped in a physically addicted person, the body goes into “shock” and the person suffers withdrawal symptoms, which are generally the opposite effects of what the drug normally produces. To stop the withdrawal symptoms, the person continues to use more drugs to keep the body “happy”. This is an abuse of our body. A lot of drugs can lead to physical addiction.



When a person is addicted, most of what they do and think about is the addiction. This is why drug addicts steal or commit other sins to get more drugs. Drug addiction makes the addict and the drug the number one focus and God is no longer the priority. The Bible tells us that we should live our life for God and that nothing else should take the place of him (1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Gal 2:20; Col 3:5).

Many people use drugs to relieve stress, escape from loneliness, make themselves happy, boost their self-confidence etc. However, drugs will never solve these problems. These are spiritual problems and spiritual problems require spiritual solutions. In fact, because drugs can lead to addiction, they actually create more problems! The more drugs you use, the deeper your

problems become. Rather than seek comfort, guidance and answers from God, drugs unfortunately become the “answer” to many people’s problems.

According to the following passages, how will our needs be met?

- Psalm 23

- Matthew 7:7-11

- Philippians 4:6-9



So there are several Biblical principles that help us understand the role of drugs in our lives:

1. We don’t own our body; our body belongs to God. Since it belongs to God we don’t have the right to do anything we want with it. Since it belongs to God we must use it according to his purposes, and not our own. Therefore, we shouldn’t take drugs simply because we think we have the right to do whatever we want with our body.

God wants our body and spirit to be holy, and not polluted by anything. We often believe that God is only interested in us being spiritually healthy, but God wants us to be physically healthy also. He wants us to take care of the body that belongs to him. Therefore, we should avoid drugs that damage our bodies.

2. God has the power to heal anything, so we should pray to him about any health problems we have. God also allows us to use human solutions like doctors and medication to treat and heal sickness, but we shouldn’t just rely on these things for healing – God wants us to pray to him about all things. God doesn’t always heal us and no human treatment will ever

stop us from dying, since the Bible tells us that we will all physically die because of sin.

3. God wants us to be self-controlled, sober-minded and alert so that we can always fellowship with him, do his will, spiritually fight Satan etc. If we are not self-controlled or alert then our ability to control our body, soul or spirit is reduced. We are then more likely to sin, not grow spiritually, and be open to attack by Satan. So we should avoid drugs that cause us to lose self-control and alertness.
4. God is an all-powerful and all-knowing God. He wants us to share all our concerns with him and he has promised to give us peace, provide for our needs and answer our prayers. We are to go to him for comfort and guidance, not to drugs which create more problems rather than solve anything.

MEMORY VERSE

We Belong To God

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

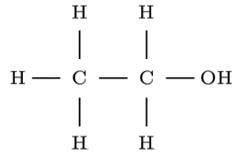


3. DRUGS USED TODAY

There are many drugs, legal and illegal, used in society today. We will just look at the most common ones.

1. ALCOHOL

Alcohol is also known as ethanol. It is produced by fermentation – the action of yeast on liquids which contain sugars and starches. Pure alcohol has no colour or taste. Alcoholic drinks vary in colour and taste because of other ingredients that are added to them. Alcohol is found in wine, beer, vodka, gin, rum, port, scotch etc. Alcohol is also added to some foods such as chocolate!



Alcohol, or wine, is the main drug the Bible talks about. Read the following verses and write down whether or not God allows us to drink alcoholic drinks.

- Deuteronomy 14:24-26

- John 2:1-11

- 1 Timothy 5:23

So God does allow us to drink alcoholic drinks, but there are some guidelines. What are those guidelines?

- Romans 13:13

- Romans 14:17-21

- Ephesians 5:18

Side Effects

Alcohol is a depressant drug – it slows down the activity of the central nervous system, including the brain. It affects co-ordination, concentration and slows down response times. In large quantities it can cause unconsciousness and death.

What things do people do when they're drunk? Proverbs 20:1 and 23:29-35 will also give you some insight.

Drinking too much alcohol over a long period of time can lead to addiction. Excessive drinking can cause brain damage, liver damage, nutritional deficiency diseases caused by a lack of healthy eating etc. Also, babies can be born with deformities if their mothers drink too much.

Benefits

Some research shows that moderate amounts of alcohol can reduce the risk of some types of cardiovascular disease.



Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, why do you think drunkenness or excessive drinking is not God's will for us?

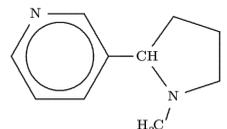
2. TOBACCO

The tobacco used for smoking comes from the leaves of the tobacco plant. Its leaves are dried and processed, and used to make cigarettes, cigars etc. The tobacco can be smoked, piped or chewed.

Side Effects

There are more than 4000 chemicals in tobacco smoke, and at least 40 are known to cause cancer. Some of the chemicals found in tobacco smoke include:

- **Nicotine** – this occurs naturally in tobacco leaves. It is a very powerful drug. Many of the nerves in the body have nicotine receptors, so the nicotine in tobacco actually stimulates a lot of nerves in the body. This can increase



brain and nervous system activity for a short time, cause increased blood pressure, decreased blood flow to the fingers and toes, abnormal heart beats, stomach ulcers etc. This is the drug in tobacco that causes addiction in smokers.

- **Tar** – this is the sticky yellow-brown substance that stains smokers’ teeth, fingers and lungs. It contains many things including cancer causing chemicals.
- **Carbon Monoxide** – this is a very toxic gas and increases the risk of heart disease. When carbon monoxide enters the blood, it takes the place of oxygen, cutting down oxygen supply to the body.
- **Cancer causing substances** – there are many cancer causing substances found in tobacco smoke. They can cause cancer of the lung, throat, mouth, bladder, kidney, stomach etc.

Other side effects of tobacco smoking include:

- Weakening of appetite, taste and smell.
- Shortness of breath and persistent coughs.
- Longer recovery time from illnesses.
- Smoking during pregnancy can harm the unborn child. In some cases children have died.
- Smokers look older than non-smokers of the same age.



Benefits

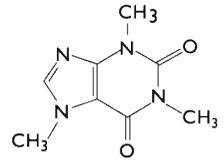
Smoking tobacco kills more people than all the other drugs put together! Since tobacco smoke contains cancer causing substances, there is no safe way to smoke tobacco.

Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, why is smoking tobacco something we should avoid? Explain your answer.

Since smoking tobacco is harmful and has no health benefits, it should no longer be available for sale. What do you think of this statement?

3. CAFFEINE

Caffeine is the most popular and widely used drug in the world. It is found naturally in many plants such as coffee plants, tea plants, the cacao plant, and the guarana plant. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, chocolate, snacks and some energy drinks.



Side Effects

Caffeine is a stimulant. It stimulates the brain and the central nervous system so that the person feels more aware and active. For most people a few cups of tea or coffee a day is generally not a problem. However it can become an addictive drug if large doses are taken for long periods of time.

Caffeine can increase heart rate, cause restlessness, dizziness, headaches etc. Heavy use of caffeine can lead to high blood pressure, osteoporosis, heart disease, insomnia, addiction and sometimes miscarriage.

Benefits

There are no known health benefits with caffeine. However, tea and coffee do have other substances in them which are known to be good for our health if we drink them in moderation. Also, chocolate tastes great!

Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, should we consume products containing caffeine? Explain your answer.

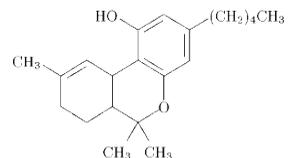


4. CANNABIS

Cannabis comes from the *Cannabis sativa* plant. Cannabis has many names such as *grass*, *pot*, *hash*, *hashish*, *weed*, *buddha* and *ganja*. Cannabis has a number of chemicals in it called *cannabinoids*, the most important is Δ^9 -tetrahydrocannabinol (Δ^9 -THC).



Cannabis can be in the form of the dried leaves and flowers of the plant (marijuana), resin blocks (sometimes called hashish) or as a thick liquid (hash oil). The concentration of Δ^9 -THC in hashish is higher than in marijuana, and its concentration in hash oil is higher than



in hashish. Cannabis is usually smoked and sometimes used in cooking to make things like “hash cookies”!

Side Effects

As for tobacco smoking, smoking cannabis has the same problems of inhaling carbon monoxide and cancer causing substances.

The other problem with cannabis use is Δ^9 -THC, and its side effects can occur if the cannabis is smoked or eaten. Δ^9 -THC is the main drug in cannabis that causes addiction.

Δ^9 -THC stimulates cannabinoid receptors in the brain. These receptors help control memory, thought, concentration, perception and movement. Since it stimulates these receptors it can:

- Make the user feel happy, relaxed, quiet or sleepy.
- Increase appetite and lead to snacking on junk food (the “munchies”).
- Negatively affect vision and hearing perception.
- Impair memory, judgment and the ability to think logically.
- Decrease co-ordination and balance.
- Create anxiety and panic reactions.

Benefits

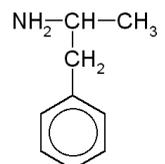
Cannabis has some positive uses:

1. In some countries, Δ^9 -THC is being tested as a medicine, particularly to help stop nausea and vomiting in patients receiving treatment for cancer and to help stimulate appetite in other patients.
2. The fibers of the stems of cannabis plants are very strong and are used to make clothing, jeans and strong ropes for the shipping industry.

It's the way the plant is used which makes it right or wrong. Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, is cannabis something we should avoid? Explain your answer.

5. AMPHETAMINES

Amphetamines are a group of chemically related drugs that are stimulants (they stimulate the brain and nervous system). They are man-made and include amphetamine, dexamphetamine, methamphetamine and methylphenidate. They're commonly known as *speed* and methamphetamine is also known as *crystal* or *ice*. Amphetamines can be inhaled, swallowed or injected.



Some people use amphetamines to get “high” and dance all night. Others use them to stay awake for long periods of time.

Side Effects

By a variety of ways, amphetamines increase the activity of what’s called the *sympathetic nervous system* in the brain and body. This causes euphoria (that may be followed by depression), restlessness, irritability, insomnia, nervousness, aggressive and psychotic behaviour, hallucinations, increased heart rate and heart irregularities. Amphetamines are also highly addictive and also damage some nerves in the brain.

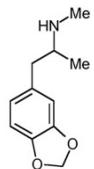
Benefits

Some amphetamines are available on prescription to treat things like narcolepsy (a condition where a person falls asleep at any time).

Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, should we take amphetamines? Explain your answer.

6. ECSTASY

Ecstasy’s scientific name is methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDMA). It’s an illegal, man-made drug. It is commonly known as *E*, *XTC* and *eccy*. It’s normally taken by mouth, but has been snorted and injected.



Side Effects

Ecstasy is similar to the amphetamines, causing stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system, so it has many of the side effects that amphetamines have. It also causes hallucinations of sight and sound.

Ecstasy is commonly used at dance parties. Initially, users of ecstasy feel alert, “high” or “hyper”, so they can keep dancing for hours! But they can also experience hallucinations, feel faint or dizzy, or become anxious and agitated.



Ecstasy also plays around with the body’s temperature system, causing the body to overheat. In some cases this has led to death. It also causes dehydration, and many users drink a lot of water to try and fix this but too much water has also resulted in death.

Long term effects of ecstasy include insomnia, depression and fatigue. It is also believed that ecstasy damages some of the nerves in the brain. Ecstasy use also leads to addiction.

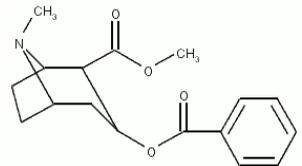
Benefits

Ecstasy is not known to have any positive properties.

Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, why should we not take ecstasy? Explain your answer.

7. COCAINE

Cocaine is a naturally occurring substance that comes from the leaves of the coca bush. It's also known as *coke*, *white lady* or *gold dust*. It normally comes in powder form, but is also available as small crystals or rocks (called *crack*). It can be smoked, injected or snorted.



Side Effects

Cocaine is a powerful stimulant that causes an increase level of several chemicals in the brain allowing people to experience sexual arousal, exhilaration and feelings of well-being. That's why it's abused by many people. However cocaine also causes anxiety, panic, poor concentration and judgment, unpredictable behaviour, hallucinations, psychosis, irregular heart beats, increased blood pressure, nose bleeds etc. Addiction is common with this drug.

Benefits

Cocaine is also used medically because it's a powerful local anaesthetic and vasoconstrictor (causes blood vessels to narrow). It is commonly used in operations of the nose and throat to help numb the pain and minimise blood loss.

Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, should we use cocaine? Explain your answer.

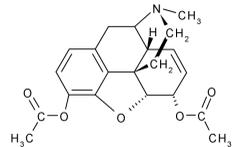
8. HEROIN

Heroin is a man-made drug. It can be made from morphine or codeine which are both naturally found in the opium poppy plant. Heroin belongs to a group of drugs called *opiates*, which include morphine, codeine, pethidine and methadone. These other opiates are commonly used in medicine to treat pain. Heroin is also known as *smack*, *dope* and *gear*. It can be injected, snorted or smoked.



Side Effects

Heroin is a powerful stimulant, and activates several types of opioid receptors in the brain. This causes a “high” and/or a “rush” feeling (an orgasm-like feeling), which is why it’s a widely used drug. But the high only lasts for a short time and is followed by drowsiness, impaired concentration, slower heart rate and blood pressure etc.



At high doses heroin shuts down the part in the brain that controls breathing, so the heroin user will stop breathing and die.

Benefits

Many years ago heroin was used as a pain killer and to stop coughs. But it has been replaced by other drugs with less side effects and are less likely to be abused.

Remembering the Biblical principles from chapter 2, is using heroin God’s will for us? Explain your answer.

9. OTHER DRUGS

There are many other legal and illegal drugs we could look at. Many medicines that are available from pharmacies (on prescription or over-the-counter) are widely abused in our society. These include pseudoephedrine (Sudafed®), sleeping tablets, antihistamines, anti-depressants, pain killers and any other drug that has an effect on the brain. Many are addicted to these drugs and have died taking them, especially when they use other drugs with them like alcohol.

If you have time, discuss any of these other drugs and what the Christian’s response should be to their use. Always keep in mind the principles laid out in chapter 2.

4. I'VE STUFFED UP – WHAT DO I DO?

Unfortunately, we sometimes sin. Even though we know what God does and doesn't want us to do, we sometimes get sucked in by our feelings and convince ourselves that it's OK to fool around (Jam 1:13-15). Before you know it, you've done something you shouldn't have done and all the "happy" moments turn to guilt, anger and disappointment. You might be thinking, "Will God ever forgive me? Will the rest of my life be a complete mess? Is God going to strike me dead? Will I be stuck in this sin for a long time – or even the rest of my life?"



If God didn't love you, then your life would end up being a complete mess and there would be no hope for you. The good news is that God does love you (John 3:16; 1 John 4:7-11) and so there is hope for you.

God's forgiveness is big enough to cover any sin.

1. Read 1 John 1:9. If we sin what should we do?

What 2 things will God then do for us?

2. God doesn't want us to sin, so he helps us. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What has God promised he will do for us when we're tempted to sin?

What should our response be each time we're tempted?

3. Another way God helps us to obey him is by the Holy Spirit who lives in every Christian (John 7:37-39; Rom 8:9-11). According to the following verses, how could God's Spirit help you have victory over temptation?

- John 14:25-26

- Galatians 5:22-23
-
-

4. The Bible tells us that obedience to God will satisfy our lives more than anything else. Since God made us, he knows what's best for us. What do the following passages tell us about the benefits of obeying God?

- Matthew 7:24-27
-
-

- John 10:7-10
-
-



- John 15:7-11
-
-
-

Below is a list of things you should do if you have sinned or want to avoid sinning.

1. Repent – make the decision to turn away from your sin and turn to God and obey him (Acts 8:22; Rev 2:19-22). Believe that Jesus Christ's death and resurrection was enough to forgive your sins (John 3:16-18,36; 5:24). Ask God to forgive you (1 John 1:9).
2. Apologise to anybody who you sinned against (Jam 5:16).
3. Cut all contact with people who deal or use drugs so you're not tempted to sin (Mat 5:29-30; 1 Cor 15:33; Heb 12:1-2).
4. Stop taking the drug (John 5:14; Eph 5:11)! Some drugs will have little or no withdrawal symptoms when you stop taking them abruptly. However, some drugs can have serious withdrawal symptoms if stopped abruptly, which could cause you problems. Consult a doctor about the best way of stopping the drug – i.e. should it be stopped immediately or gradually? Also, you may need to see a doctor if your health is in bad shape. Most importantly, **pray about your health!**

5. Make sure God is number one in your life (Mat 6:33).
6. Read the Bible regularly and fill your mind with the word of God (Mat 4:1-11; Phil 4:8-9; 2 Tim 3:16-17).
7. Memorise the memory verses in this study (including 1 Cor 10:13). They will pop up in your head when the going gets tough and remind you of what to do.
8. Pray regularly and specifically for the problem you're facing. Ask God to help you (Mat 6:13; Phi 4:6-7; 1 Thes 5:17).
9. Don't lose your Christian friends! Keep going to church. At church you'll be disciplined, encouraged and make friends (Heb 10:24-25).
10. Be accountable to a mature Christian friend who is the same sex as you (your home group leader is willing to help you).

Think about how you have messed up with drugs. What is God saying to you now?

MEMORY VERSE

God Forgives Us

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

