

Is The Use Of Tobacco Wrong?

There have been many sermons preached and many articles written throughout the years on the subject of tobacco. Occasionally, you even have a Christian defend its use. But I will tell you up front that I do not believe that a Christian should use this substance in any form, whether it be cigarettes, cigars or dip. I believe it harmful to us physically, morally and eternally. It is for this reason that this article will examine the reasons why the use of tobacco is wrong.

Before getting into the specific reasons, it is very helpful to remember some important facts. First, the Bible gives us the answers to all of today's questions. There is not a single question for which we cannot find some answer. Second, our bodies belong to God, therefore, anything that would defile them would be wrong. Third, God made us, therefore, He knows better what is good and right for our bodies than ourselves. Fourth, human life is sacred. Therefore, the murder of innocent life is an abomination in God's sight. Fifth, anything that would cause another honest brother or sister to stumble is wrong. Keep these important facts in mind as we investigate the use of tobacco.

The primary ingredient in tobacco, nicotine, is a poison. In fact, the toxicity of nicotine is comparable to that of cyanide. The only reason why nicotine is not more deadly is that it is diluted in tobacco products and much of it is eliminated from the body. Nicotine has been a traditional ingredient in animal repellents and insecticides, until costs became prohibitive. Furthermore, cigarette and cigar smoke also contains carbon monoxide, which is the same deadly gas emitted from automobiles, and cancer-causing carcinogens. The fact is that every time a person ingests tobacco products, he or she is taking poison into their system. Understanding this, let's look at some reasons why the use of tobacco is wrong.

First, tobacco users stand self-convicted. I have never seen a long-time tobacco user recommend that a non-user start. On the contrary, all I have talked to have urged young people to never take up the habit. If it is such a good activity, why do smokers advise against its use? Most will admit, "It is a bad and nasty habit." Many will become angry when the subject is discussed. If a Christian can defend it as good and wholesome, why get so angry and defensive about its use?

Second, is a questionable practice. Even among those who will not admit that it is sinful would admit that they have some questions about its use. Romans 14:14, 23 says, "*I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that*

there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean ... And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Third, its use enslaves the user. It is obvious that the use of tobacco tends to be addictive. How often have you seen smokers, etc. who have tried to quit and have all kinds of problems "kicking the habit"? It tends to control the tobacco users actions. From getting out of bed to getting back into bed, the tobacco user is controlled by tobacco. What does the New Testament say about enslavement? Peter wrote, *"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage"* (2 Peter 2:19). Furthermore, Paul wrote, *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any"* (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Fourth, it is destructive to the body. Can there be little doubt that tobacco products are damaging to the human body? There is much evidence to show that smokers have far more chance of getting sick than non-smokers. For example, smokers suffer 70% more heart attacks than non-smokers. What does the New Testament say about damaging the human body? *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). *"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Fifth, it hurts the influence. Many non-Christians are turned off by a Christian who smokes. Most Christians understand this fact. Many who smoke will attempt to hide it in the presence of other Christians. Those who use tobacco certainly do not help the influence of the church, and often hurt it. Soberly consider what the Bible says about influence and tell me if you think smoking or chewing tobacco has a negative influence on Christians (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 5:3; 1 Timothy 4:12). Now we will turn our attention to arguments made for the use of tobacco.

First, "The Bible does not say not to smoke, chew, etc." This is a useless argument. While it is true that the Bible does not specifically say something about tobacco, there are principles that would guide us in determine whether its use is right. Such could just as easily be said about heroin consumption, eating rat poison, euthanasia, etc.

Second, "The Bible says that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out." This is a gross misinterpretation of Matthew 15:18. Jesus is speaking of the outward washing of hands. His disciples had been accused of not being righteous because they did not carry on the Pharisaical custom of washing hands before eating. He demonstrates that eating foods prior to washing does not make one holy or unholy, it is what is inside of you. Would some drunkenness or cocaine use be acceptable since it was not on the inside?

Third, "I knew so and so, he/she lived into their eighties and used tobacco every day of their lives. Tobacco did not kill them." This does not prove anything either. The fact is that every study, even though sponsored by the tobacco industry, has found that those who use tobacco significantly reduce their life expectancy. Someone may happen to beat the odds and live to an old age. Do you want to gamble with sickness, radiation and chemotherapy, and an agonizing death?

Fourth, "I like it, and it does not seem to be hurting me." Personal likes and dislikes do not change whether something is wrong. Most tobacco users, who have been using it any length of time admit that they would like to quit. If it is a great and harmless product to use, why do they want to quit?

Fifth, "Overeating is bad for you too." There is little doubt that many in the church do overeat and have a weight problem. This can happen for various reasons, but just because many preachers, elders, deacons, and other member of the church have a weight problem does not change the truth about tobacco.

Sixth, "It is none of your business." This is the final resort of a person who cannot argue his case successfully. However, the Bible does tell us that we should be concerned about others. Galatians 6:1 says, "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*" James 5:19-20 adds, "*Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*"

I must confess that I do not know how hard it is to quit using tobacco. However, experiences with my brother in the flesh and with other Christians have shown me that it is pretty hard to do. We should have compassion on those who smoke, chew, etc. We should provide any help we can to those who are trying to quit. We should never be haughty and rude toward those who are weaker. If you smoke or chew tobacco, seek the Lord's help in prayer, seek help from other Christians and do whatever it takes to quit.

William Talman played District Attorney Burger in the famous Perry Mason television series. He made a commercial for the American Cancer Society shortly before his death. On it he told how he smoked and how he was "in a battle I cannot afford to lose." At the end he said, "If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, stop. Don't be a loser." As the screen faded, the message was flashed on the screen that Mr. Talman died of lung cancer shortly after the making of the commercial.

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