

WHAT ABOUT THE USE OF TOBACCO?

Fact: The use of tobacco is the #1 preventable cause of death in the United States.¹

Fact: Each year in America over 440,000 people die due to health complications caused by using tobacco.²

Fact: Each year the use of tobacco kills more Americans than alcohol, AIDS, drug abuse, car wrecks, murders, suicides, and fires – combined.³

You would think that something that is as destructive to society as tobacco is, would be banned. But, no, in America both smoking and non-smoking tobacco are readily available, and the sale of them is perfectly legal. Rest assured that a lot of people make big bucks by legally selling tobacco. Again, you would think that anything which is as deadly as tobacco is, would be “avoided like the plague.” Wrong again. Nearly 50 million Americans are regular smokers, meaning that about one out of every four adults in our society are habitual puffers.¹

Many of us remember the cigarette ads that used to fill the airways of both television and radio before the United States Congress in 1970 passed a law banning them. Such punch lines as, “I’d walk a mile for a Camel” and Tareyton’s, “I’d rather fight than switch,” were real attention-getters. Those cigarette ads, along with their modern-day counterparts in magazines and on billboards throughout the world, always seem to portray smoking as such a glamorous and desirable activity. Is that really true? In this brief tract we want to take a look at the use of tobacco from three standpoints: Scientific/health, Social, and Scriptural. What about the use of tobacco? “*Come and see*” (John 1:39).

The use of tobacco from a SCIENTIFIC/HEALTH standpoint.

Tobacco “contains tar (numerous chemicals that cause a thick, sticky substance to form in the lungs when smoked) and over 4,000 chemicals in total.”⁵ Some of the chemicals that are in tobacco smoke are ammonia (as in toilet bowl cleaner), carbon monoxide (as in car exhaust), and cyanide (as in rat poison). When a person smokes, he/she is literally poisoning his/her body. Have you ever observed a young boy that takes his first drag on a cigarette? A common reaction in such cases is for his body to respond by coughing, gagging, and maybe even vomiting. What is his body trying to tell him? “Entrance denied. Keep that stuff out of here!”

One that smokes is cutting short his/her life. Medical facts clearly verify this. Come with me to the hospitals and funeral homes and I’ll show you whether or not it is no big deal to poison the body with tobacco. In 1965 the U.S. Congress passed a law requiring the following warning to be put on all cigarette packages: “Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health.” In 1970 the message on cigarette packages was updated to read: “Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.”⁶ Note carefully the difference in those two statements. Now, please consider some of the effects that tobacco has on a person’s health.

> “It is now well documented that smoking cigarettes causes chronic lung and heart disease, and cancer of the lung, esophagus, larynx, mouth, and bladder. Cigarette smoking contributes to cancer of the pancreas, kidney, and cervix.”⁷

> It is no wonder that cigarettes are nicknamed “cancer sticks.” “Men who smoke increase their risk of death from lung cancer by more than 22 times, and from bronchitis and emphysema by nearly 10 times. Women who smoke increase their risk of dying from lung cancer by nearly 12 times and the risk of dying from bronchitis and emphysema by more than 10 times. Smoking triples the risk of dying from heart disease among middle-aged” people.⁸

> Tobacco use by pregnant women increases their risk of miscarriage, the risk of having low birth weight babies, and the newborn’s risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).⁹

What about the use of smokeless tobacco? Is the use of chewing tobacco or “snuff” a safe alternative to smoking? Evidence indicates that smokeless tobacco also does great harm to the human body. Here are some of the health risks for users of smokeless tobacco: nicotine addiction, a decreased sense of both taste and smell, coronary artery disease, angina, heart attacks, aneurysms, hypertension, blood clots, and strokes. And did we mention that the use of smokeless tobacco increases the risk of mouth cancer by 50 times!¹⁰ That is not a misprint – a person that is a regular user of smokeless tobacco has a 50 times greater chance of getting oral cancer than a person that does not use it. No, friend, smokeless tobacco is not harmless, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Let’s face it: the use of tobacco destroys the body. Thus, from a health standpoint, tobacco use does not pass the test. Now, observe:

The use of tobacco from a SOCIAL standpoint.

We freely admit that tobacco has had some beneficial uses. Nicotine sulfate has been shown to be effective both as an insecticide (insect killer), as well as a poison to kill sharks. Tobacco has also been used in some dog repellents.¹¹ So, if you need to kill insects and fish, or just keep animals away, nicotine or tobacco may be just what you want.

On the other hand, there are some social aspects of tobacco use that do *not* get a “thumbs up.” What would you think if I continually blew smoke in the face of a baby? Surely you would be appalled at such action, and rightfully so. But did you realize that it is often the case that people who themselves do not smoke suffer with health problems due to secondhand smoke, that is, the smoke that comes from other people’s cigarettes? It’s true.

> Secondhand smoke in a crowded restaurant can cause up to six times the pollution of a busy road.

> In the U.S. *secondhand smoke kills* about 3000 non-smokers every year from lung cancer, plus it annually causes about 300,000 cases of lung infections like bronchitis and pneumonia in infants and young children.¹²

Under the heading “Tobacco And Personal Appearance,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* put out the following message to kids and young people. “Yuck! Tobacco smoke can make hair and clothes stink. Tobacco stains teeth and causes bad breath. Short-term use of spit tobacco can cause cracked lips, white spots, sores, and bleeding in the mouth. Surgery to remove oral cancers caused by tobacco use can lead to serious changes in the face. Sean Marcee, a high school star athlete who used spit tobacco, died of oral cancer when he was 19 years old.”¹³ As unpleasant as it may be to think about it, this truth remains: the use of tobacco has an extremely negative effect on the user’s appearance and body odor.

Young people and all that are concerned about young people need to read carefully this next statement. “Teens who smoke are 3 times more likely than nonsmokers to use alcohol, 8 times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine.”¹⁴ No, that does *not* mean that every smoker will turn into a boozier, a user of marijuana, or one that does cocaine. But, one that smokes has a much greater chance of becoming involved in one of these other harmful activities. History bears it out.

In view of the material cited above, it is obvious that from a social standpoint, taking tobacco into one’s body fails the test. That brings us to the final phase of our study:

The use of tobacco from a SCRIPTURAL standpoint.

The word “tobacco” is not in the Bible. That means that there is no passage in God’s word that says, “Thou shalt not smoke (or dip or chew).” There are, however, some principles that apply to the use of tobacco, and to these we now turn our attention. If you have a desire to spend eternity in heaven, then surely each of these items will be of interest to you.

- Fact #1 – A Christian is to present his body as a living sacrifice (not smokestack!) to God (Rom. 12:2).
- Fact #2 – A Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and is to be used to glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19,20). Should it be destroyed by tobacco’s poison?
- Fact #3 – A Christian is to be a pattern of good works and let his light shine (Tit. 2:7; Matt. 5:16).
- Fact #4 – A Christian is to be a faithful steward of all that the Lord places in his hands, including his finances (1 Cor. 4:2). Buying tobacco is such a waste.
- Fact #5 – A Christian is to provide things honorable in the sight of both God and men (2 Cor. 8:21).
- Fact #6 – A Christian is not to be brought under the power of or addicted to anything (1 Cor. 6:12). Have you ever heard of tobacco being addictive?
- Fact #7 – God’s children are to act wisely, not foolishly (Eph. 5:15). How wise is it to willingly do harm to the temple of the Holy Spirit?
- Fact #8 – If we do not “practice what we preach” when it comes to tobacco use, then those around us, especially young people, will cry, “Hypocrite” (Rom. 2:21). We are duty-bound to plainly spell out to others the harmful effects of using tobacco. We won’t be too effective in doing that when we smell like tobacco or have our mouth full of it.
- Fact #9 – Out of love, a Christian is to treat others like he wants to be treated, doing no harm to his neighbor (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 13:10). How “neighborly” is it to injure others with secondhand smoke?
- Fact #10 – A Christian is to crucify or put to death the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:24). That means that for one who follows Jesus, the use of tobacco ought to be a thing of the past. Tobacco use violates all of the Bible principles just noted, and we believe that those who study God’s word with a sincere heart will accept and apply His truth in their lives.

So, what about the use of tobacco? It does not pass the test, not from a Scientific/health standpoint, not from a Social standpoint, and not from a Scriptural standpoint. Our plea is simple. If you have never used tobacco, don’t begin. If you used it in the past but have given it up, then good for you. If you are still a tobacco user, then we beg you to give it up – for the good of your physical body, as well as for the salvation of your soul.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/issue.htm>

² Ibid.

³ www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tips_4_youth/quiz_answers.htm

⁴ <http://health.yahoo.com/health/dc/002032/0.html>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ http://health.yahoo.com/health/tobacco/Facts_and_Figures/Chronology_Significant_Developments_Related_to_Smoking_and_Health_1964-1996.html

⁷ http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/overview/tobus_us.htm

⁸ http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/research_data/health_consequences/mortali.htm

⁹ <http://health.yahoo.com/health/dc/002032/0.html>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "The Christian and Tobacco," by Thomas F. Eaves, in *Living Soberly, Righteously, and Godly*, 1977, p. 266.

¹² http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tips_4_youth/facts.htm

¹³ www.cdc.gov/tobacco/educational_materials/yuthfax1.htm

¹⁴ www.cdc.gov/tobacco/research_data/youth/ythsprt.htm

Note: The info from all web sites referenced above was taken from those sources on June 17,18, 2002.

-- Roger D. Campbell