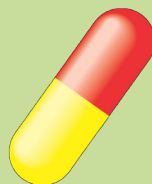


Insight Into

May/ June 2019



Choices



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Meditation • A Moment to Decide
Bible Study • Choices that Hurt or Kill
Three Lessons • Is Marijuana Addictive?

Insight Into

General Information

Insight Into is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg, *President*

Rev. H. Hofman, *Vice President*

Elder R. de Kok, *Editorial Committee Member*

Elder J. Timmer, *Administrator*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The address of this magazine is that of the secretary of the Editorial Committee:

Mr. James Timmer
2026 Timon Road
Everson, WA 98247
U.S.A.
Jim@westcoastplants.com

Authors are requested to send their articles to:

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg
8920-3 Broadway St.
Chilliwack, B.C. Canada V2P 5W1

If possible, send your contribution by e-mail:
ppvanruit@gmail.com

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For subscriptions, payment, address changes, or an e-mail copy, please contact:

Mrs. Marian Lagemaat nrcinsightinto@gmail.com
8886 Upper Prairie Road 604-794-5887 PST
Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 6H4 Canada

Mailing manager: Mrs. Lena Sterkenburg
Print and Design: Sunrise Printing Inc.

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MEDITATION

The Place and Value of the Cornerstone

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?”

(Matthew 21:42).

Rev. J. Witvoet

Dear friends,

Do you have the feeling that nothing is solid, certain, or sure? We live in a time of so much change. Our friends can change so quickly, our circumstances in life, our health, and so on. Is there anything that is solid, unmovable, never changing? Yes, Scripture tells us that God is unchangeable, *“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”* (Malachi 3:6). How can we ever become united to this unchangeable God? Well, let us hear of One who is an infinity broad, unmovable rock.

The rejected Stone

Our text is a response by the Lord Jesus upon the question of the chief priests and Pharisees regarding His authority (Matthew 21:23). They were offended that He cleansed the temple and pointed out the thievery of their pious, self-willed religion. They hated Him the more when He told them that the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of heaven before they would. They thought they would not only be the inhabitants but also the builders of that kingdom. After all, they had the blueprint from the Master Architect who had chosen their father Abraham; and out of His seed a great building would be constructed. They thought to be the experts that could follow the blueprint to the closest detail. Moreover, they had the perfectly hewn stones of their prayers and religion. Do you ever feel the need that the temple of your heart must be thoroughly cleansed and purified and that your righteousnesses are all as an unclean thing?

The Cornerstone

Now the Lord comes to say they are missing the cornerstone. That is the strongest stone placed in the corner of the foundation that must support and bind all together. Upon this stone the whole building either stands or falls. They were not only missing it, but they would cast it away when it was placed before them. They had no use for that stone as it was set before their eyes, because it didn’t fit their plan. It was the wrong shape for their building. That Stone was the Lord Himself, elect and precious, and sent of the Father with all authority, strength, and durability (Isaiah 43:4). These Jews would despise, reject, and cast Him from them, thinking to be rid of Him. He was only a rock of offense to them, and He had no place in their building. They were waiting for one they could place on top of their building.

The chief Cornerstone

We read, “*This is the Lord’s doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes.*” He is and remains the Head of the corner of His kingdom. In spite of the actions of the Jews, He would become the chief Cornerstone. They would kill Him, but they were only the instruments in the Lord’s hand to fulfill His perfect plan for a building to rise from the dust of the wreck and ruin of sin. He would rise again that a building made of stones selected and precious in His sight from eternity would be chiseled out in time and set in their prescribed place upon that Foundation. Have you been raised from the ruin of your sinful existence and set upon this rock?

A wonder is needed

Young friends, “*this is the Lord’s doing,*” but what about us? *Are we* building our own fine-looking building and have it all planned out? Some are building one that is built of stones which are so smooth and square. Since they know it so well, they have cut a place for Him to fit atop their building where they speak of always gazing at Him. But what shall happen when He comes with all authority? It will be realized that their calculations were wrong. The building will crumble, because He was never needed as the chief Cornerstone. All those stones will be ground to powder (Matthew 21:44b). It must become a marvel to us! A wonder needs to take place. Are you praying for this wonder? When the Lord comes to show us what we are, who we have cast off and rejected in Paradise, what we are guilty of, and that we are sunk away in the mire of sin and guilt, then we marvel that we are not in hell. How much more marvellous it becomes when we see that it is possible for us to be saved and placed as a stone in the wall of that building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. How? Because there was One who was rejected of men, forsaken of His Father, and was willing to sink to the depths of hell for sinners. He now becomes the chief Cornerstone.

A sure Foundation

The “publicans and sinners” see themselves as chipped, broken, and crumbling stones needing to be lifted from the dust. For them He becomes precious. They need that Cornerstone under them. In due time Christ is placed in their hearts where that kingdom is built, and He alone supports and binds together that entire building (Luke 17:21). No, they cannot always see Him, but they have a sure Foundation. They are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone. They learn to fall on Him with a true saving faith wrought by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 21:44a). They believe, and they will never be confounded (1 Peter 2:6-7). One day they will behold Him fully in His perfect strength, beauty, and authority. This will remain a marvel in their eyes to all eternity. Has He become precious also to you?

“Look, as a painted man is no man, and as painted fire is no fire, so a cold prayer is no prayer.” ~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

A MOMENT TO DECIDE

Taken from the *Christian Renewal* magazine,
with editing by the *Insight Into* editors



Pastor Geoffrey Thomas

There comes a test in the experience of every man when the whole direction of his life is under divine review. He has arrived at a fork in the road and he has to make a decision. It happened with Lot when he and his uncle Abram had to go different ways, “*And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee*” (Genesis 13:8). The attraction of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, was irresistible to Lot and he went to live near them. Soon he became an actual resident of Sodom, lingered there, and was both vexed and corrupted. His family too became so much a part of the city’s life that his wife longingly looked back at Sodom as they escaped from its destruction, and she shared in its judgment. It began with the choice of living too near Sodom.

One day, when the armies of Israel were doing battle, David the king was walking on the roof of his palace when he spied a woman bathing. It was decision time, whether to look away and get on with his duties or take a second look. David took the second course, and the consequences of this for himself, the woman, her husband, and the child born to the illicit union, and for all of the nation was lamentable. The decision to look a second time ruined David’s name.

The Apostle Peter was given a word by the Lord Jesus Christ of a coming great test, and an exhortation to watch and pray to avoid it. But Peter’s confidence in his own resources brushed those concerns aside. Others might well falter, he believed, but not him. “*Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell thee, Peter, The cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me*” (Luke 22:33-34). He failed the test and down Peter went, and great was the fall. He had carried on without heeding Jesus’ warning.

Jonathan Edwards’ grandson

In the history of the church, there was scarcely a greater fall than that of the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, Aaron Burr. Iain Murray says that he was “sadly, the best known of Jonathan Edwards’ posterity” (*Jonathan Edwards*, page 445). His mother Esther was the third daughter of the great preacher. She was eight years of age when she listened to George Whitefield on his first

visit to her church. When she herself was married, Whitefield was a beloved guest at her home. Esther went with her father on horseback on some of the journeys away from home. At 20 she married 36-year-old Aaron Burr, a pastor and president of the New Jersey College at Princeton, famed for his cheerful temperament. They lived 150 miles from her happy home, and the distance resulted in history being bequeathed some wonderful father-daughter letters and also a journal which Esther kept for three years, a narrative of day-to-day events written in installments for her close friend Sally Prince, another pastor's daughter. What insights she also displays almost in passing: "That knowledge of God that does not produce a love to Him and desire to be like Him is not a true knowledge." And again, "God has enabled me to trust in Him and rely upon Him—and 'tis my comfort and joy that He will be glorified whatever becomes of me." In 1756, her son was born and named after his father. In 1758, four days before the graduation of the first class at Princeton, at the age of 41 Aaron Burr died, worn out by so many labours. Esther wrote a letter breaking the news to her parents. "God has seemed sensibly near in such a supporting and comfortable manner that I think I have never experienced the like." Within weeks baby Aaron was seriously ill. On November 2, Esther wrote to her father, "I did give myself and my children to God, with my whole heart." Jonathan Edwards himself was appointed to follow his son-in-law as president of the Princeton College, but in the following six months he, his father, and Esther herself all died. Aaron Burr and his sister Sally were left as orphans and were taken in by Esther's brother Timothy Edwards.

When Aaron Burr was a teenager he became a student at Princeton. It was a remarkable time in the history of that institution. David B. Calhoun's two volumes, *Princeton Seminary* (Banner of Truth), capture the happy godliness of the place. While he was there a spiritual awakening took place and a deep seriousness took hold of many students. His mother had witnessed such a time in the college and written to her father about it. William Tennent had come and reported to Samuel Davies, "I went to the college last Monday, and saw a memorable display of God's power and grace in the conviction of sinners. The whole house was a Bochim. A sense of God's holiness was so impressed on the hearts of its inhabitants that all of them, excepting two (esteemed religious), were greatly shaken as to the state of their souls ... This blessed work of the Most High so far exceeded all my expectations that I was lost in surprise and constrained to say: "Is it so? Can it be so?" Nor was my being eye and ear witness, from Monday until Friday, able to recover me from my astonishment. I felt as the apostles when it was told them the Lord had risen" (*op. cit.*, Iain Murray, page 432).

A professor met Aaron Burr on the grounds of Princeton at the latter similar awakening and said to him, "If God is speaking to you, then you had best respond to His call. Go to your room and settle this matter with Him." It was the definitive moment in the life of Burr as such times had come into the experience of Lot and David and Peter. He thought of all he had experienced,

that he had been given to God by his mother when seriously ill before his first birthday, the privileges of his background, the preaching he had later known, and the Bible he had been taught. Now there was the evident presence of God at the college and the obvious conviction which many of his friends were experiencing. An old poem says, *“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide, In the strife of truth with falsehood for the good or evil side”* (James Lowell).

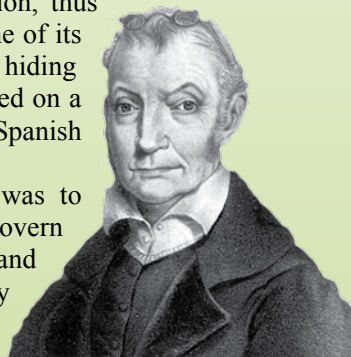
Burr too resolved the issue that time and never turned from that course. When that same professor met him some days later and asked him if he had settled the issue Burr replied, “Yes, I have.” “What was the outcome?” “I settled it with God, and told Him that if He would let me alone, I would let Him alone, and that settled it.”

Journey into the abyss

So away from Jesus Christ went Aaron Burr. He became a sharp-faced lawyer in New York, increasingly involved in politics, using an organization called the Sons of St. Tammany to build up a factional city machine. In the 1800 presidential election, Thomas Jefferson ran against John Quincy Adams. The issue was decided by Aaron Burr, Jefferson’s running mate, whose Tammany organization carried New York, the swing state. So, Jefferson beat Adams by 73 votes to 65. But Burr also got 73 votes and the House had to decide whether Thomas Jefferson or Jonathan Edwards’ grandson would become the president of the United States. After much skullduggery Jefferson got the votes.

In 1804, Burr ran for governor of New York against Alexander Hamilton. Burr was defeated and was consumed with anger, having suffered two narrow defeats in four years. Hamilton remarked that Burr was “a dangerous man and one who ought not to be trusted.” On July 11, Aaron Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel. Paul Johnson writes, “Hamilton strongly disapproved of dueling but felt he could not in honour decline the challenge. His conscience, however, forbade him to shoot at his opponent” (*A History of the American People*, page 209). Aaron Burr had long set his fife against the voice of his conscience: “Burr killed him without compunction, thus removing from the chessboard of American power one of its most baroque and unpredictable pieces. Burr went into hiding in Virginia, re-emerged, went west, and there embarked on a series of plots to create a new independent state from Spanish Mexico” (*ibid.*).

It was said of Aaron Burr that his real intent was to dismember the United States since his attempts to govern it had failed. In 1807, Burr was tried for treason, and although he was acquitted, he was bankrupt financially and bereft of reputation. For a few years he lived in Europe but while rejecting the grace of God, he found



no peace in a trans-Atlantic domicile. He returned to America and started a law practice. Little came of it and he died virtually friendless in 1836. His last request was that he might be buried in the cemetery of Princeton Seminary as near as possible to the feet of his father and of Jonathan Edwards his grandfather.

Great watersheds

Great watersheds come into our lives. God speaks to us while His Spirit is working in our congregations. Friends are professing faiths, but we are tarrying. If we make a decision to turn another way, its consequences can be an eternal disaster. One drop of rain may fall to the east of the Rocky Mountains' watershed and it can end up in the Atlantic Ocean, while another drop from the same shower may fall a few yards to the west and can end its course in the Pacific. J. C. Ryle warns us, "You have only got to walk in Lot's steps and make Lot's choice, and you will soon come to Lot's state of soul. Allow yourself to do as he did, presume to act as he acted, and be very sure you will soon discover you have become a wretched "lingerer" like him. You will find, like Samson, the presence of the Lord is no longer with you. You will prove, to your own shame, an undecided hesitating man in the day of trial. There will come a canker in your religion, and eat out its vitality without your knowing it" (*Holiness*, page 158).

Remember the falls of Lot, David, and Peter. When coming to a fork in the road, such as the choosing of a marriage partner, the selection of a job, or the village or town you are going to live in, think of Aaron Burr and the disastrous course on which he set out. He wanted to be buried near the dust of the men of God, but he did not want to live in vital fellowship with the Son of God. Will your spouse-to-be help you to walk with God? Will your employment give you time on Sundays for worship? Will the place you live in have a pulpit where you will hear Christ crucified? Can you afford to take any decision in life without the most earnest prayer for God's blessing to rest upon them? If God cannot bless, you may not act. Great choices need great grace. Do not think for a moment that your own case is beyond recovery. Do not exist with melancholic breast-beating but with hope. Come back to God. Why stay away? Confess your folly, and come. "*Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*" (Jeremiah 3:22).

"As the way to Canaan lay through a howling wilderness and desert, so the path to heaven lies through much affliction."

~ Rev. Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

"He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day."

~ John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Bible Study



From the *Self-Interpreting Bible* of Rev. John Brown (1722-1787)
of Haddington, Scotland

(Please read Ecclesiastes 1)

To warn others, Solomon here in verse 2 represents the vanity and vexation which adheres to all created enjoyments, particularly to those in which men ordinarily look for happiness; as human learning and policy, sensual delights, honour, power, and riches, or an empty profession of religion; prescribes remedies against that vanity and vexation which attend those things, namely, sitting loose to them, enjoying them moderately, but never expecting much from them; acquiescing in the will of God concerning us in every event; remembering God in the days of our youth; and continuing all our life in His fear and service; with an eye to the future judgment. But in both parts the demonstrations of the vanity of things, and the prescriptions of remedies, are somewhat mixed.

The Preacher showeth that human courses are vain (verse 4), because the creatures are restless in their courses (verse 9), they bring forth nothing new, and all old things are forgotten (verse 12), and because he hath found it to be so in the studies of wisdom.

Verse 2

“*Vanity*” - a vapour, emptiness, an object destitute of real good, a statement destitute of truth, an idol, because destitute of that life and power which its ignorant worshippers ascribe to it.

Verse 4

“*Forever*”: This earth *abideth* through “*all generations*” and “*we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth*” (2 Peter 3:13), so that the earth literally “*abideth forever*.”

Verse 9

“*There is no new thing under the sun.*” There is nothing new in nature, in moral principles, in sciences, or in arts. New discoveries are but the adoption of principles already in full operation in nature, or the revival of things forgotten.

New combinations and applications, however, of old principles, there may be, and this is the utmost novelty that humans may claim.

Verse 13

“I gave my heart to seek ...” Not by vain philosophy, falsely called wisdom; but by that which begins in the *“fear of the LORD”* and embraces all that is revealed of the *“manifold wisdom of God”* in Jesus Christ (Psalm 111:10; Ephesians 3:10).

Verse 15

A world where everything crooked, inconvenient, annoying, adverse, could be made straight--and where everything wanting in wishes, desires, accomplishments, possessions, could be obtained--would not be suited to the present fallen state of man. God has therefore in mercy, while He inflicted the curse, suited this *“sore travail”* as a check to the natural and a discipline to the renewed man.

Verse 17

Madness - sometimes applied to great and unreasonable anger; more frequently to persons who understand and can discourse well upon all subjects but one. And such ever is the mere intellectual and moral man, wise upon all subjects but one, the knowledge of God in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18-24; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

Verse 18

The reason of this is that human wisdom can only demonstrate the vanity of all earthly things. It proves that pleasure is short-lived, that fame soon passes away, that wealth cannot prolong life; that no source of human enjoyment is or can be lasting. The more man knows of these things, the more he reflects upon them; if he has no higher source of happiness, the more miserable must he become.

Reflection

How feelingly a true penitent, from his own experience, preaches that vanity and vexation which attend created enjoyments! All things indeed in nature concur to manifest this humbling truth, though it is very hard to convince most men of it: for, notwithstanding the perpetual flux, returns, and oblivion with which created things are marked, we are too apt to be resting in them. Neither our own observation nor experience, nor the dictates of the Spirit of God, are credited by us. Take heed, my soul, never more to esteem or desire them as God; never more depend on or delight in them as thy God. If, by all my labours for human knowledge, I can neither satisfy my mind, rectify my nature or lot, nor amend the world, let me study to know Christ and Him crucified; thus shall I be changed into the same image from glory to glory. And let this knowledge, which is eternal life, be the chief object of my pursuit.



Choices that Hurt or Kill

Rev. A. T. Vergunst

The young man was in his mid-twenties. After his testimony I asked him, “What made you start?” His answer was, “Curiosity!”

He had graduated from high school, and he owned his truck and a small business at 18. At 19, he bought a house and expanded his business. All went well until he attended a party. Someone pressured him to try it, and he relented and did. From then on, his journey changed. He lost his business, his house, his truck, started stealing from his parents and grandparents, and he ended up in prison in Waupun.

What did he do? He tried heroin. Just once. It hooked him and dragged him “to the chambers of death” (Proverbs 7:27; 9:18).

Solomon’s questions

Solomon asked his son, “*Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*” (Proverbs 6:27-28). I don’t know what his son answered, but I know what answers I get when I ask these questions. “No way! That’s foolish!” Correct. That *is* foolish. Sizzling clothes and sore feet aren’t worth it.

Yet, young friends, how often we forget to ask these questions when someone offers us a smoke, some weed, or any other kind of drug. If you are not familiar with the facts on how fatal even one curious dabbling with drugs can be, then educate yourself. Drugs kill people slowly, mentally, and spiritually. I personally know people who have used weed, cocaine, heroin, or other drugs long term and they aren’t the same anymore. Substance abuse fries the brain. It is highly addictive, making it almost impossible to escape its grasp. It leaves a biological footprint in both body and mind, just as pornography does. Any kind of substance abuse is a form of killing yourself. It is a banquet in the grave.

Choices

Solomon's questions force us to face the fact that we must make choices. The doctrine of total depravity doesn't mean that you and I can't make any choices. Instead, it means we are so corrupt that we cannot save ourselves. No, it is even worse. We aren't *willing* to be saved.

Yet this reality doesn't excuse us. God holds us responsible for every choice we make, from Adam's fall to each wrong choice we make daily. Paul wrote, "*Who will render to every man according to his deeds*" (Romans 2:6). "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

We can't make the choice to reverse the fallen condition of our hearts, yet we still can make good choices. To fasten my seatbelt is a good choice I make each time I drive the car. I can choose to pick up a good or a bad book. I also can choose to eat healthy food or snack on junk food, to go and party at a bar, or share wholesome time with friends and family. These choices are ours to make.

If you think this through, notice how most of our daily life is made up of choices. It begins in the morning with the choice to get up on time or snooze longer, the choice whether to shower, what to wear, what to eat, and what to pack for lunch. But along that line of choices, there was one choice you made the day before, what time to set the alarm, so that there would be enough time for prayer and reading God's Word.

Use your head

Have you ever heard your parents say, "Boy, girl, use your head!"? That's basically what Elijah asked the people of Israel. He asked, "*How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him*" (1 Kings 18:21). In Hebrew, the word used is a word picture: "How long will you limp on two (broken) crutches?" He told them to make a choice. He challenged them to think, *Who is worth following, Baal or Jehovah?*

Friends, we are not irrational objects that have no sense. Even though we are fallen, we haven't lost our ability to think. Our former spiritual leaders worded that brilliantly in the Canons of Dordt. They wrote that we retain some glimmerings of natural light. It is not enough to bring us to a saving knowledge of God and true conversion. We need God's regenerating Spirit for that. It is also not enough to ensure we make the right choices. Very easily we pollute or darken those glimmerings that are still left. How? By making wrong choices, contrary to what we know is right, or by letting our feelings guide us in our choices.

Cab and trailer

What leads the combination of cab and trailer? The driver sits in the cab which leads the trailer. God has designed us similarly. We have our mind,

feelings, and will. Feelings should *never* lead us in our choices. Are you tempted to try drugs because people say, “Oh, man, you should try this; it makes you feel so good, so relaxed, and is pleasurable.” Notice the “feeling” words in this proposal!

Satan knows how to tempt us. He successfully snared Adam and Eve through their feelings. Moses records their downfall, “*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat*” (Genesis 3:6). Satan still uses this approach. He parades sex, drugs, alcohol, material success, and whatever other pleasures he can before our eyes.

Satan tried the “feel-good” approach with Jesus. He tempted Jesus when he was very hungry with the mouth-watering suggestion to make bread out of stones (Matthew 4:3). He brought thoughts about the horror of the cross to Jesus’ mind and then suggested an easier way to the throne, “*All these things will I give Thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*” (Matthew 4:9).

But Jesus wasn’t guided by His feelings. In His youth, He had obeyed Solomon’s commands, “*My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life, to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman*” (Proverbs 6:20-24).

Feelings should never guide us. Often, we may need to act contrary to our feelings. Your desires to be included, admired, or loved are not good counselors to lead you. Instead, the Word of God is to guide you.

Flee!

Many years ago drug prevention programs used a slogan, “Just Say No.” While a valuable direction, it is not sufficient. Our sinful nature needs far more than good advice or direction.

When tempted to try drugs, remember that “*you are taking fire into your bosom which will burn you*” (Proverbs 6:27). When someone gives you a needle, remember that “*her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death*” (Proverbs 7:27). When someone reasons with you that you can handle one swipe, remember the truth, “*For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her*” (Proverbs 7:26).

Remember that before “Saying no!” are the words, “Don’t go!” Solomon pictured a foolish young man, void of understanding. In other words, someone who had switched off his “first-think-this-through” mindset. What did he see this young man do? “*Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark*”

night: *And, behold, there met him a woman*” (Proverbs 7:8-10). After that, he was lost and ended with a dart in his liver, as a bird in the snare (Proverbs 7:23). The young fellow thought he could handle it! He couldn't. You can't! I can't! Therefore, don't go into the way; don't even get close to it.

Seek grace to be like Joseph and flee from the sources of temptation, no matter how good they feel. To whom should we flee? Simon Peter said, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). No one else can save us from our wicked hearts that crave the sinful banquets offered in this world.

Escape

Many snared in substance abuse were looking for medicine. Trying to escape the inner pain or physical pain, to get away from the hurting circumstances, they reach for drugs. Alcohol and drugs are not solutions; they only make problems bigger. If you know anyone or if you yourself are struggling with any form of addiction, seek help with trusted adults, or leaders in school or church.

Testimony

I asked a young woman how she managed to get through three years of public high school, where drugs, sex, music, and parties filled the lives of most of her classmates. This is how she answered me:

I reminded myself frequently that the three years in that high school were a drop compared to eternity. Did I want to give up a whole eternity for fitting in with the world? Not that I thought I would go to heaven if I did remain separate, but I knew I was choosing one of two paths: Remain a seeker of the truth or give up the teachings of my parents and church for an ungodly life. The teen years are critical for setting the path one's life takes! Of course, God can bring back those that forsake Him, but it seldom happens. To live an ungodly lifestyle is consciously choosing death.

“It is not much *praying* that is condemned ... but much *speaking*; the danger of this error is when we only *say* our prayers, not when we *pray* them.”
~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

“When we make self the end of prayer, it is not worship but self-seeking.”
~ Rev. William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

Three Lessons

J. van Kralingen

Have you ever learned the verse near the end of Matthew 6, a verse which has good advice for everyone? But perhaps it especially has good advice for young people like you, starting out on life's journey. It says, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (verse 33). Try to think over these words and what exactly they mean.

A minister of long ago was explaining this verse to young people. He said there were three different lessons in it for them to learn:

1. A grammar lesson: The first word, *seek*, is a verb, an action word. It is giving a command, *seek*. It is not just a suggestion; it is something you must do. It is your duty to obey the command.

2. An arithmetic lesson: *First*. This is the most important thing for you to do in life. The things of Christ should have priority over all your own things. Let the *first* part of your life, the days of your youth, be set apart to God. Also seek Him *first* every morning; let your first waking thoughts be of God as you read your Bible and pray.

3. A geography lesson: "*The kingdom of God.*" This includes all that belongs to the honour and glory of God. The Bible is your guidebook to this *kingdom*; so make sure you read your Bible and obey it. You should be seeking eternal happiness for yourself. You need to know Christ and to be clothed in *His righteousness*.

There is a little poem which sums up the teaching of this verse:

"Seek ye *first* the kingdom; not the things of earth,
Priceless are the treasures of immortal worth.
Like a flitting shadow, time will pass away,
But the heavenly riches change not, nor decay.

Seek ye *first* the kingdom; seek the gift of God,
'Tis the Saviour's offer, purchased by His blood.
Seek ye *first* His glory; be it life's sweet aim;
Him to serve and honour, trusting in His name."

(E. Hewitt)

Will you not pray with Moses, in the words of Psalm 90, "*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom ... O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days*" (verses 12 and 14).



IS *marijuana* ADDICTIVE?

*marijuana abuse & addiction
changes the way a person
thinks, acts, and behaves*

Dr. Scott Timmer

Marijuana

“It will make you feel good! Everyone does it. It’s safe. Besides, it’s legal now.” If you haven’t yet heard this from a peer at high school, work, or college, it is likely you will soon. But are these claims accurate? Is marijuana really safe?

“Mark” is a 25-year-old previously healthy male I met in the hospital several months ago. He smokes 1 to 2 joints of marijuana per day. One day at work his right hand and leg suddenly became weak and clumsy. He was immediately taken to the emergency room and diagnosed with an ischemic stroke that left him partially paralyzed on the right side of his body. A little known fact is that marijuana can cause strokes and heart attacks in young people with few other risk factors. It is likely that Mark’s marijuana use was the cause of this devastating stroke.

The purpose of this article is to give a medical perspective on marijuana use (also known as cannabis, hemp, or “weed”). As a medical doctor, I have seen first-hand the negative impact this drug has on our society and the burden it can be on our medical system. Since this drug is now legal for “recreational” use throughout Canada and in 10 of 50 states in the United States, it is especially important to be informed about this topic. It is my intent to clear up some of the confusion about the potential risks and purported health benefits of this drug.

THC: An intoxicating dangerous drug

Scientists have identified many biologically active chemicals in marijuana. The two most studied are *delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol* (THC) and *cannabidiol* (CBD). THC is the intoxicating compound in marijuana that makes people experience a “high.” It is usually smoked but is also available in an oil form that can be added to foods. This is the substance that has been recently legalized in Canada and several states in the United States. On the other hand, CBD does not cause a high and is legally available as a natural supplement in all 50 states and in Canada. CBD is sold in the form of “cannabis oil” online and in some health food stores. It is marketed for many purposes, including chronic pain. However, it should be realized that many of these purported claims lack scientific evidence. The rest of this article will focus on the THC form of marijuana.

Misconceptions about marijuana

Like many health topics, much can be found online which at best is misleading

and at worst is purposeful deception. Health benefits of marijuana (THC) are vastly exaggerated. It has been marketed as the cure for chronic pain, cancer, headaches, seizures, etc. Many believe marijuana to be a safe alternative to prescription drugs for medical ailments. These misconceptions are often based on several false premises.

Misconception #1: “Marijuana is natural, so it must be safer than prescription drugs.” Just because something is natural does not make it safe. Cocaine and heroin are also natural (derived from plants) and most certainly not safe!

Misconception #2: “Marijuana is safer than cigarettes.” Many of the same carcinogen (cancer-causing) chemicals found in cigarettes are also found in marijuana. Use of marijuana has already been linked to an increased risk of heart attacks (up to 5 times the risk) and stroke.

Misconception #3: “Marijuana has been around for a long time; what’s the big deal?” Marijuana today is not the same marijuana of the 1960s. In an effort to find the perfect “high,” marijuana growers have perfected the methods of isolating and concentrating THC. As a result, the marijuana joints today can be up to 10 times as strong compared to fifty years ago.

Misconception #4: “Smoking a joint is not the same as drug abuse.” Occasional use of marijuana often leads to regular use. This then becomes the “gateway” to harder drugs. If you ask those who became addicted to cocaine, meth, or heroin, they will often tell you the first drug they abused was marijuana.

Mind-altering effects

Unlike tobacco, marijuana is a mind-altering substance that decreases motivation (i.e., causes laziness), impairs memory, slows sensation of time, and alters our perception of reality. In fact, marijuana use is the leading cause of emergency room visits for psychosis, the medical term for someone who is out of their right mind! Last year alone there were 90,000 emergency room visits for cannabis-induced psychosis. Often this comes in the form of severe paranoia or anxiety. Marijuana use even in small doses has also been shown to impair attention and concentration. The effect of this has already been seen in the increased number of car accidents in states that have legalized recreational marijuana use. For example, car accidents in Colorado, Washington, and Oregon have increased 6% since legalization of marijuana, compared to neighbouring states where marijuana is still illegal.

Cyclic vomiting syndrome

Another little known fact is that THC is stored in the fat cells of the body and can be present for up to 30 days after use, especially when used daily. The drug is slowly released during this time period, mainly during meals. This can cause a disease called cyclic vomiting syndrome caused by an effect of the THC on the nerves of the stomach. These people often come to the hospital with unexplained severe vomiting that lasts for days. I have seen multiple young people who were admitted to the hospital with this condition. Often upon

interviewing them and through drug tests, we find out they have been using marijuana on a regular basis. It should also be noted that marijuana increases a person's appetite which often leads to obesity.

Mental illness

Even more concerning is the long-term effects of marijuana use on mental health. Regular use has been shown to cause structural changes in the brain including volume loss. Despite what is claimed online regarding marijuana as a treatment for depression or anxiety, multiple studies have shown that marijuana may aggravate or even cause severe mental illness. A recent summary of multiple medical studies found that marijuana use, especially in adolescents aged 15 to 19, is a risk factor for major depression, social anxiety disorder, and suicide. Although a causal relationship has yet to be proven, the National Academy of Medicine found in 2017 that cannabis use likely increases the risk of developing schizophrenia, a form of severe and incurable mental illness characterized by social withdrawal and recurrent psychosis. It is interesting that 27% of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia have also been diagnosed with cannabis-use disorder in their lifetimes. It should be noted that this includes only those with a known cannabis abuse problem. There are likely many more that were unrecognized.

Violence

Despite its reputation for making users calm and relaxed, in some cases cannabis use may provoke violence. Especially in those with a history of severe mental illness, cannabis use can cause fearful paranoid ideas leading a person to mistakenly think their life is in danger from certain other individuals. This may provoke them to violent crime including murder out of desperation and self-preservation. Regrettably, these risks are more than theoretical. Four states that have recently legalized marijuana for recreational use (Colorado, Washington, Alaska, and Oregon) have seen a 37% increase in the murder rate and a 25% increase in aggravated assaults over the last 5 years since legalization of marijuana.

Loss of intelligence!

Teenagers who regularly smoke marijuana may be especially vulnerable to long-term negative effects. This is described in the following summary of a scientific article:

Although we already knew from past research that if you started smoking pot as a teen, you'll be more likely to get addicted, new research (just published in a well-known journal called Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences) now says if you smoke marijuana heavily as a teenager, it can actually lower your IQ!

Scientists looked at more than 1,000 people born in 1972 and 1973. When they were 13 years old, they were given IQ and other kinds of intelligence tests.

They were interviewed every few years about their use of marijuana and then tested again when they were 38 years old.

The results? Those who smoked weed heavily as teens showed mental decline even after they quit using the drug--and had, on average, an 8-point drop in their IQ scores. An 8-point loss could push a person of average intelligence into the lower third of testers. Those who started smoking pot after age 18 also showed some decline, but not as much.

(source: NIH/National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens website: <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/can-smoking-marijuana-actually-lower-your-iq?page=1>)

Happiness?

What is the ultimate solution and alternative to illicit drug use? As the Westminster Shorter Confession states, we were made “to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever” (Answer to Question 1). Man-made euphoria is a vain attempt at happiness which can only be found in God alone. We were not made to waste our life or to be enslaved to the intoxicating effect of drugs, but rather we were made for communion with God through Christ. Those who look for happiness in other things (whether it is drugs, possessions, popularity, or any other worldly thing) will find that none of these will satisfy us. In fact, nothing outside of God can truly satisfy, but will only leave us empty. As the Lord Jesus says in John 4:13-14, *“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”* Therefore, we must seek happiness where it only can be found, in a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. *“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 15:13).

Biblical texts

“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Proverbs 1:10).

“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3).

“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9).

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