

3 Reasons to Reject Legalizing Marijuana

“They just found my daughter dead!” This unexpected and startling revelation jolted my morning.

At the mall where I exercise, a middle-aged mother darted from the Starbucks and stammered the above words just a few days ago.

“Larry, remember when I asked you to pray for my 27-year-old daughter a couple months ago?” she said. “A guy came into her life. ... This was her first real boyfriend. ... He made her feel special. ... He also introduced her to getting high. She’d never done drugs! It wasn’t hard stuff—just recreational. Now she’s dead! This wasn’t supposed to happen!”

I took her hand and we prayed together. Reassuring her as best as I could, I then slipped away, saddened by the tragic news of this mother’s only child now gone.

I have a daughter too. She works long hours in a youth venue where more than a thousand young people come weekly. She regularly shares with us how many are trying pot, leading them down a path to inevitable consequences that break her heart and bring devastation to them and their families.

Most of us by now have read the news that marijuana was officially declared legal for recreational use in Colorado, as it now is in Washington state. Portland, Maine, and Lansing, Mich., have jumped on the bandwagon too. Initiatives to legalize and legitimize toking up for innocent fun are being pushed nationwide.

A Pendulum Is Swinging

In 1969, Americans opposed the legalization of marijuana by an

overwhelming 7 to 1 majority. Now more than half of Americans support it—and two-thirds of those are ages 18 to 34!

Is this a good thing?

An ancient proverb gives us a heads up: “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it” (Prov. 22:3, ESV). My best friend of more than 20 years growing up ignored this advice and was dead before 30. Like a Cheech and Chong character, he naïvely thought casual drug use was harmless, following the anthem, “All I wanna do is have some fun.”

How about you? Consider the following before you are misled by blind leaders of whom Jesus forewarned: “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15:14, KJV).

A line from the classic Eagles song “Hotel California” serves as ample warning as we proceed: “You can check out any time you please but you can never leave.”

1. Don't be duped.

Our Founding Father, George Washington, told us, “An uninformed populace is easily enslaved.” Addressing arguments for legalizing marijuana demands discernment and the ability to recognize a pig with lipstick on.

The “Yes We Cannabis!” movement is out in full force. Advocates and lobbyists are aggressive and persuasive but misguided and dishonest to the core. Like same-sex marriage proponents, they tell us it's time to be “enlightened,” “progressive,” “cool,” to shake off the “old-school mentality” and reject everything discriminatory and restrictive in our culture. After all, Amsterdam has joints available alongside coffee in shops throughout its country—we need to get with the program!

• **“It'll balance the budget, save the economy and create**

scores of jobs!" In reality, this represents no more than a drop in the bucket while conveniently ignoring other economic realities.

- **"It eliminates the need for law enforcement plus provides needed tax revenue."** A whole new set of rules and regulations have to be established and enforced. Most people don't voluntarily pay taxes out of sheer civic duty.
- **"This won't affect youth. It's only for ages 21 and up and private use only. Since you can grow it at home, it won't go out. It's not sold on the streets."** Who are we kidding? Look at all the scrambling going on in Colorado as people get around all the so-called rules and authorities turn a blind eye to what's really going on. Clever operators use limos with "free" pot. Drug dealers buy the weed and sell it to support habits. Are signs in airports saying don't take any home really effective? Within 24 hours of legalizing marijuana, a 2-year-old girl ended up in the hospital after eating a marijuana cookie.
- **"It's for cancer patients."** So-called "medical marijuana" for the most part goes out for trumped-up stress and pain relief excuses. Scores simply want it legalized so they can get stoned, avoid jail, party and make some fast cash. L.A. has already closed 200 "marijuana clinics" because of this travesty while Holland, Portugal and Zürich, Switzerland, are changing drug policies because of exploding social problems.
- **"Marijuana is not addictive. It's like a beer-harmless. It's not as bad as cocaine or heroin."** We'll address these, but here's the deal best conveyed by an expert: Dr. Ed Gogek, a Democrat and addiction psychiatrist, wrote in the *New York Times*, "I've spent 25 years as a doctor treating drug abusers ... They're excellent con artists. ... Marijuana activists use phony science. ... For years they claimed pot was good for glaucoma and never apologized when research found it could actually make

glaucoma worse. They still insist weed isn't addictive, despite every addiction medicine society saying it is. They've even produced their own flawed scientific studies supposedly proving that medical marijuana laws don't increase use among teenagers, when almost all the evidence says just the opposite. ... It sends the message that weed is harmless, even though research shows that teenagers who use it regularly do worse in school, are twice as likely to drop out and earn less as adults. Teenage use has been shown to permanently lower I.Q."

The New York Times published an editorial on Aug. 5, 2012, telling us, "Some hard-core drug dealers are victims and shouldn't be imprisoned." In December, our president commuted the sentences of eight federal inmates convicted of crack cocaine. It's obvious the liberal trends in our culture are in the direction of liberalizing and legalizing drugs unless there arises an "informed populace."

2. Your Health Matters

Our Declaration of Independence refers to God as our Creator. He designed us in His image, directing us to care for our bodies and avoid destructive influences. Why? So we glorify Him in what He calls a "temple," which we have "received from God. You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies" (1 Cor. 6:19-20, NIV).

Just as you would not put gunky, contaminated oil into an expensive Lexus, so too are we to steer clear of polluting our bodies with toxic elements that bring about a premature demise.

If they were able to have a second chance, do you think celebrities like Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson and multitudes of others who met their tragic end from drugs would encourage you to get started by lighting up a joint? We only pray that in their final moments they repented

and got their lives right with a merciful and just God.

In Revelation 22:15, God tells us that “drug users and spell-casters” (CEB) and “sorcerers” (KJV) are under the wrath of God and associated with “dogs”—an idiom for despicable persons. Their severe punishment is separation from God for all eternity. The Greek word used here is *pharmakeus*, from which we get our word *pharmaceuticals*. Thayer’s Dictionary defines this as “one who prepares or uses magical remedies.”

In Jesus’ weakest moment on the cross, He deliberately refused any mind-altering intoxicant that was offered to Him (Matt. 27:34). He serves as our example—not singers, movie stars or politicians who persuade the multitudes into drug usage.

THC, the active component in marijuana plants (the cause of people getting “high”), is eight times as potent as the “weed” of decades ago. Just like inhaling toxic cigarette smoke, it adversely affects the lungs. In fact, one joint is the equivalent of 20 cigarettes, plus consider how long people hold it inside.

Smoking cigarettes kills 400,000 Americans every year. Fifty thousand die from secondhand smoke. Another 8.6 million citizens have illnesses caused directly by smoking. Cigarette smoking cuts lives short by an average of 13 years. Daily misleading and deceptive ads lure multitudes down this path. Guess what unseen entity is trying to do something similar by promoting marijuana?

There are more than 30 scientific studies that show higher risk of schizophrenia and paranoia among marijuana users. It increases one’s heart rate, producing a fivefold increase in heart attacks and panic attacks.

Some people scoff at statements like these and say they’re merely scare tactics. Do you want to risk your future by relying on potheads, pop stars and politicians? These pied pipers will one day be accountable to God for their reckless

and irresponsible ways.

Joseph Califano, head of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, pulls no punches when he says that marijuana is a “dangerous drug that is addictive and adversely affects the motor skills of users as well as produces serious damage to a person’s brain over the long-term.”

To whom are you going to listen?

3. Avoid Deception

TV and movies abound with stories about demons, the paranormal, vampires, zombies and the unseen evil realm. It’s real, and Jesus Christ told us that our spiritual adversary comes as a thief to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). The Bible clearly warns us not to be “ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

As America drifts from its Judeo-Christian roots and standards, people’s perceptions of marijuana have changed drastically—especially among easily impressionable youth.

Scores of teenagers have been deceived to view the drug as harmless. Therefore, more are indulging. In 2013, 1 in 15 high school seniors reported using marijuana daily. Ten years ago, it was 1 in 50! This most recent national survey also revealed that only 40 percent of high school seniors now believe smoking marijuana is risky, compared to 75 percent 20 years ago.

The delusion is not only in their perception of the drug but in their penchant to partake of it as a means of escape. Why not? “It’s legal—or soon will be,” they say. “It’s increasingly available. Pop stars I admire use it, sing and joke about it ,and even promote it. Gimme a joint!”

Young people struggling through their teen years, instead of turning to God or their parents or godly counselors, find it

easier to escape problems and depression by medicating with drugs like marijuana since it's becoming such an easy solution. The snare is that when the buzz wears off and a habit pattern develops of grabbing another joint or experimenting with harder drugs, soon one is addicted—and then it's either more drugs or maybe yield to those persistent suicidal thoughts to simply end it all.

Like in the classic film *Wizard of Oz*, when Dorothy pulled back the curtain and exposed the deceiving mastermind behind the facade, will multitudes take heed to the facts being presented and rise up to resist the pull into destruction? More importantly, will you?

Stay tuned for four more reasons to reject legalizing marijuana in my next column.

Larry Tomczak is a best-selling author and cultural commentator with over 40 years of trusted ministry experience. His passion is to bring perspective, analysis and insight from a biblical worldview. He loves people and loves awakening them to today's cultural realities and the responses needed for the bride of Christ—His church—to become influential in all spheres of life once again.