

4 More Reasons to Reject Legalizing Marijuana

Editor's Note: In part 1 of this column, best-selling author Larry Tomczak offered three reasons to reject legalizing marijuana. But those aren't the only reasons. He continues his "Here's the Deal" exposé on the illegal drug with four more good reasons why America shouldn't go to pot.

1. Maintain Maximum Mental Capacity

National surveys continue to indicate the overwhelming majority of Americans believe our nation is headed in the wrong direction, while others believe we are coming to the close of the age. Apocalyptic warnings seem to be swirling all around us amidst accelerating moral decline. (Take, for example, a film out now featuring Leonardo DiCaprio with a torrent of 506 F-words and 22 explicit sex scenes!)

How can any sane American Christian not say emphatically that our nation needs a true spiritual awakening to bring us back from the brink before it's too late? How can any pastor in our nation be content to just preach happy, encouraging sermons and steer clear of anything political, deluded into believing that abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, drug legalization, gay marriage, radical Islamic terrorism, encroaching socialism, our obscene escalating federal debt, the Middle East powder keg, North Korea and Iranian nukes, eroding religious freedoms, rampant divorce, out of control pornography, gun violence and epidemic fatherlessness will all just fade away if we avoid talking about them, tell people God loves them and simply pray things will get better?

The scriptural admonition for the days in which we're living is clear: "The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so you can pray" (1 Pet. 4:7, NIV).

Pot smoking fosters just the opposite.

As mentioned in my previous article, Joseph Califano declares without qualification that pot smoking adversely affects motor skills and does serious damage to the brain over the long-term. Objective studies repeatedly show that regular users find their IQ dropping and all cognitive functions hindered.

A recent study from Northwestern University established clearly that teen “potheads” had brain abnormalities related to poor short-term memory performance. Healthy individuals who did not use marijuana scored 37 times better on average than users—*not just addicts*—who had smoked pot in the past.

Morning Joe TV cohost Joe Scarborough said on national TV recently that he never smoked pot. “Why do I want to make my odds for success even longer?” he said. “It just makes you dumb!”

The executive director of the Drug Free America Foundation in St. Petersburg, Fla., Calvin Fay, states the case even stronger: “It’s a big lie to say marijuana is not harmful. We are fooling ourselves if we think legalizing drugs is not going to be extremely detrimental to our children.” She knows it’s only common sense that people of any age who are toking up are going to adversely affect their minds and alter their consciousness.

Matthew Leahy was in the newspapers a short time ago where it stated he started smoking marijuana at 14, experienced a drop in grades and then eventually ended up in a mental hospital, where he hung himself. A more uplifting testimony is the one I heard personally of a ninth-grader who regularly smoked pot, which he said “really messed up [his] mind,” but he was grateful to God that he had been set free from the addiction that was ruining his life.

This all may seem so self-evident, but let’s face it: Many parents are reluctant to speak out against this because they

feel hypocritical, having experimented when they were younger. Moms and dads, your children's lives are at stake! Sit down and share transparently that you were acting stupidly many decades ago, but now from real experience you know the dangers and care enough to waive the red flag: "Bridge out! Stop. Don't go there!"

2. Protect Public Safety

Many marijuana advocates will tell you that we already allow alcohol, so why shouldn't we allow pot? Granted, beer and wine and adult beverages have been around for thousands of years, and unfortunately some people abuse them. Scripture speaks of moderation and obeying the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1-8) regarding laws. Adult beverages are a cultural reality, and it was foolishness when people tried to prohibit their usage because, in fact, the Bible doesn't prohibit their responsible use.

Just because some people overindulge and do harm due to alcohol, that is not a valid reason to exacerbate the situation by adding dope to the mix! I'm sure you've heard the adage "Don't point to bad behavior to justify more bad behavior."

Here's the deal:

- 33,000 Americans are killed yearly in traffic accidents, one-third because of drunk drivers. How many others are left impaired or paralyzed for life?
- 1.2 million drivers are arrested annually for drunken-driving. The highest number is among 21- to 25-year-olds.
- 1 in 3 people will be involved in a drunk driving crash in their lifetime.
- Car crashes are the leading cause of deaths for teens. Teenage alcoholic use kills over 4,700 every year.
- Drunk driving costs you and me \$132 billion a year.

Be honest with yourself: In light of the above, do you want to compound these sobering statistics by making marijuana freely available?

A deterrent to drinking and driving is the alcohol aroma on one's breath. That basically goes out the window when people think they can smoke a few joints outside, drive "high" down the highway and never dream of one day standing before a judge with a weeping father who lost the love of his life and three children via an intoxicated driver. Think about it, along with the prison term and lifetime of guilt that follows.

By the way, the pop stars, comedians, politicians and marijuana pushers won't be standing with you in that court room. They might be perusing their latest issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine, discovering new ways to promote pot in between occasional, unfortunate stories on celebrities that have bit the dust from pursuing the hedonistic lifestyle they applaud.

3. Don't Relinquish Control of Your Life

Our culture attempts to airbrush away sin and its consequences as it emphasizes a message: Indulge yourself (instead of control yourself). Yet there are three maxims of life from which we cannot escape:

1. Life is a series of choices.
2. Choices bring consequences (eventually, not always immediately).
3. Choices determine destiny.

As people increasingly get stoned and yield the control of their lives to ingested substances that bring temporary highs, the results are weaker individuals and a weaker nation. *Uber-liberal* and *Newsweek* editor Tina Brown released a statement recently where she said, "Legal weed contributes to us being a fatter, dumber, sleepier nation even less able to compete with the Chinese."

Scripture tells us our lives are to be surrendered to God and that we are to draw upon His grace to resist temptations that can bring us into destructive enslavement to sin. Jesus cautioned us when He said, "I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead end life and is, in fact, a slave" (John 8:34, MSG).

The fact is, marijuana easily becomes habit-forming in the lives of people, especially impressionable youth. It often times becomes a gateway to other drugs.

The most successful ministry that has helped bring deliverance to thousands of drug-addicted young people is Teen Challenge, with a track record of more than 30 years. Jack Smith, president of the Teen Challenge USA chapter in Missouri, says, "Our experience is that marijuana is a gateway drug leading to harder and more damaging drugs. Well over half our students indicate the first drug they really were involved with was marijuana."

Government agencies such as the FDA and the Drug Enforcement Administration have all published reports showing over the years the addictive nature of marijuana. Try it once, try it again when things get tough—a "buzz" beats reality any day!

USA Today just reported the following in an article on addiction and marijuana: "A group of addiction counselors and physicians said they're seeing more marijuana addiction problems, especially in youths, and that wider pot availability will exacerbate the problem."

"This is just throwing gas on the fire," says Ben Cort of the Colorado Center for Dependency, Addiction and Rehabilitation at the University of Colorado hospital.

Pop culture paints a glamorous and enticing picture of a life with pot and uninhibited freedom. Miley Cyrus lights up a joint on stage and the crowd hoots and hollers approval. Then she strips off clothes and gets on the wrecking ball to swing

naked across the room in her video viewed by over 3 million.

The book of Proverbs paints a different picture, and it's not too flattering. Repetitious sinful activity is likened to a dog returning to its vomit (Prov. 26:11). This is an aphorism referring to foolish people who lack moral behavior and repeat indulgence in activities that bring about their inevitable ruin.

The pro-marijuana magazine *High Times* won't tell you this. Remember that cryptic line in the Eagles song, "You can check out anytime you please, but you can never leave"?

4. Be Responsible and Care for Our Children

Jesus Christ, the most influential person who ever lived in human history, demonstrated genuine care and concern for children. Not only did He heal them, but He strongly rebuked His disciples when they tried to keep them away. He warned us, "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:6, NIV).

Now, let's get real. When we talk about legalizing marijuana, what message are we sending to this next generation? Something along the lines of, "It's legal. It's OK. Like cigarettes, it's the adult thing to do. Don't worry about getting caught. Today they just wink at you anyway—give you a ticket, with no arrest and no record!"

Clever politicians rationalize and assure voters they'll have stringent regulations to keep pot out of young people's hands.

Fearful and selfish parents are caving because they don't want to alienate their children and, after all, juveniles have to experiment and find out about life for themselves.

One TV commentator went so far as to say, "Lets give it a

go—these are laboratories of democracy,” referring to municipalities legalizing pot. In other words, why don’t we just give it a try and evaluate down the road? After all, we’ve had other social experiments, like the welfare state, no-fault divorce and abortion on demand. They’ve been disasters and have brought devastating consequences to millions of lives (and over 55 million unborn), but, hey, what the heck—let’s see what happens!

“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22).

On this point, we cannot and must not be silent. We cannot offer up our precious little ones and future generations on the altar of selfishness and hedonistic pleasure. To deceive ourselves by saying we will just keep it out of their hands is sheer lunacy. Think of how many parents’ liquor cabinets, refrigerators and medicine closets have been raided easily by youth tempted to experiment!

How about the 16-year-old boy who recently got ahold of some drugs and alcohol and then drove a car, killing four people and paralyzing another? And yes, he got a decade of probation, as dad and mom weren’t really on top of things.

- 1 in 6 youth who try marijuana before age 18 will either abuse it or will become addicted. —National Institutes of Health
- Teenagers using pot before age 18 are 2 to 4 times more likely to develop psychoses as young adults compared to those who don’t.
- “We are fooling ourselves if we think legalizing drugs is not going to be extremely detrimental to our children.” —Executive director of the Drug Free America Foundation in St. Petersburg, Fla.

A Little Long but Overdue

Here’s the deal: This commentary had to be comprehensive and

not merely a few bullet points for easy reading. We must face up to the coming tsunami! This is a perfect storm gaining daily momentum, and it must be stopped in its tracks before it is too late.

May I ask you to help communicate this commentary to as many people as possible—starting today?

I would also encourage you to watch a documentary called *Narco Cultura*. It does what I'm endeavoring to do with this commentary: raise awareness of what can happen if we do not awaken to what's happening concerning the push to legalize pot and other drugs.

The focus of the film is on Juarez, Mexico, and what has happened there in a brief time as drugs became increasingly accepted and promoted. It's very personal for me, since I planted churches in both Juarez and its sister city across the border, El Paso, Texas.

What was once a beautiful and peaceful Mexican city is now a drug-infested war zone. El Paso was labeled "the most peaceful city in the USA," with only five homicides in a year. Juarez records more than 3,500 homicides in a year! Most small businesses are closed. Fear and assassinations abound with bombs, AK-47s and decapitations. Narco culture music is very popular with the youth, who are now living amidst the legalized and illegal drug culture.

The most poignant part of the film comes at the end, where a massive rally is being held in Durango. A Hispanic woman speaks passionately as she calls the people to "awaken in our city to gain awareness of what happened in Juarez and realize it can be here next! Mexico is being destroyed unless we change!"

I appeal to you, the reader, to heed this woman's warning as the United States of America hangs in the balance.

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.