

Legalizing Marijuana is Deceptive, Destructive and Downright Dumb

“Drug addiction has become virtually an epidemic in cities and towns, rural and urban, across America.” –Franklin Graham, *Decision Magazine*, Dec. 2016

After the tumultuous election, actor Tommy Chong consoled himself by celebrating Californians’ vote to legalize marijuana for recreational use. “Thank God pot is legal now, so we have something that can get us through the next four years!”

Amidst the startling Trump upset, multitudes missed the advancement of marijuana legalization in America. Now residents in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Colorado, Massachusetts Maine and D.C. can all get blasted. Additionally, Arkansas, Florida and North Dakota approved “medical marijuana,” usually the first step towards legalizing weed for recreational use.

Making marijuana mainstream is the goal of aggressive advocates of marijuana legalization. After all, they tell us, smoking weed is “safe, harmless and fun.”

Hollywood liberals are almost obsessed with reefer madness as pot-centric shows propagandize children and youth. Cannabis comedies are coming at us at breakneck speed.

While people replay Showtime’s *Weeds* series, HBO offers up “High Maintenance” about a dope dealer. MTV’s “Mary+Jane” features two roommates running a pot-delivery service in LA. Netflix readies the stoner series “Disjointed,” while Amazon has Margaret Cho crafting her marijuana dispensary-themed series.

These join other shows like "Broad City," "Transparent" and "The Get Down" where casually enjoying dope is as common place as a glass of wine. David Bienenstock of *High Times* magazine says this is a "huge sign of progress that shows increasing social acceptance."

Is all this a good thing—a sign of enlightened social progress?

Remember the Trojan horse? The phrase "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts" has relevance here.

Just like the Greek army in 1200 BC destroyed Troy through subterfuge, marijuana advocates are doing the same with their seductive logic.

In Homer's epic "Odyssey," Grecian soldiers were unable to get into the seemingly impenetrable city of Troy for over a decade, so they pretended to sail away, leaving a victory trophy of a giant hollow wooden horse for their victors. The gullible people of Troy pulled it inside and then, as they slept, Greek soldiers inside the horse came out, opened the gates and the rest of their army returned under the cover of night to destroy the city.

The Trojan horse symbolizes a deception wherein an unsuspecting people, not vigilant, lets an enemy slip in bringing destruction. Because the targeted group is more dumb than discerning, its members suffer serious consequences.

This is what's happening in our nation regarding marijuana legalization. Eighty-four million people are now under liberalized pot laws, and momentum is picking up. We need a biblical worldview on this issue in order to influence legislation as well as inform our children.

Unfortunately, many pastors and parents ignore the danger of drugs until it hits home. I've seen this repeatedly in more than 44 years of pastoral ministry.

Cool, hipster parents shrug off the dangers of weed, some even indulging themselves (in secret, of course). One day their kids enter their teens, start experimenting with drugs and Dad and Mom have a “come to Jesus moment,” recognizing real danger.

Their once spry and sharp-thinking child starts displaying some telltale danger signs:

- Grades start dropping
- Personality changes—nervous, lying
- Accidents at home and on the road with those suspicious new friends
- Money mysteriously missing
- Odor-masking techniques in gear—breath, cologne, incense
- Discovery of items hidden in trash—rolling papers, baggies
- Mood swings—withdrawn, fidgety
- Bedroom doors locked and long delays in opening

Quickly, the “harmless” and “only medicinal” reassurances of politicians and pop stars ring hollow as Mom and Dad come to their senses and realize they’ve been duped.

Time to Wake Up and Wise Up

When marijuana proponents glorify drugs and celebrate its “harmless,” even “beneficial” effects, we need to reject their fallacious reasoning. Dr. Ed Gogek, an addiction psychiatrist said in *The New York Times*, “I’ve spent 25 years as a doctor treating drug abusers, and I know their games. They are excellent con artists.”

He went on to call marijuana activists “phony scientists,” adding:

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 even produced their own flawed scientific studies supposedly proving that medical marijuana laws don't increase use among teenagers, when almost all the evidence is 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 IQ.

A recent study from Northwestern University found that teens who were regular marijuana users have poor long-term memory in adulthood. Healthy individuals who did not abuse marijuana performed about 18 percent better than younger adults who abused marijuana.

Drug addiction, including marijuana, heroin, cocaine and opioids, is a serious "public health crisis claiming nearly 100 people each day in the USA." (USA Today, Sept. 16, 2016). Although marijuana usage and addiction is often minimized in public debate, honest individuals don't discount it but identify it as a gateway drug that puts people on a path to addiction and stronger intoxicants.

The National Institute of Health makes it clear: "One in six youth who try marijuana before age 18 will either abuse it or will become addicted." Those are dangerous odds. Is this really what we want for our children and grandchildren?

Marijuana easily becomes habit-forming in the lives of vulnerable and impressionable young people. Listen to the words of Jack Smith, president of Teen Challenge USA Missouri, representing the most successful ministry bringing deliverance to thousands of drug addicted young people for over 40 years: "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."

Pop culture paints a glamorous and enticing picture of a life with pot and uninhibited freedom from any real consequences. It's a ruse.

The book of Proverbs paints a different picture, and it's not flattering. Repetitious sinful activity is likened to a "dog return[ing] to its vomit" (Prov. 26:11). It refers to fools who lack moral restraint and repeat indulgence in activities that bring about their inevitable ruin.

Legalization of marijuana puts people on the road to destruction. Don't be taken in by this Trojan horse; it's downright dumb and dangerous.

Pot Proponents are Wrong

Throughout our history, there have been individuals advocating certain drugs later proven to devastate lives, marriages and families. Think about just a few:

- Thalidomide was promoted as a "wonder drug" to help women experience better pregnancies until over 3,500 severely deformed babies were born in the early '60s, and it was pulled off the market.
- Cigarettes were promoted as healthy and relaxing by doctors and superstar icons like Mickey Mantle, Clark Gable, Bette Davis and an actor named Ronald Reagan. Fred Flintstone even puffed cigarettes in cartoons for kids until tobacco's cancer-causing elements were exposed.
- One hundred years ago, doctors approved heroin and cocaine as non-addictive drugs prescribed for ailments, especially as a cough remedy. Major corporations advertised heroin-laced products and cocaine toothache drops. Now we rightfully label them lethal and illegal.
- Smokeless chewing tobacco has been a popular part of major-league baseball for decades. After Tony Gwynn died of salivary cancer from using the product during his

Hall of Fame career, MLB executives finally enacted the first ban of smokeless tobacco, the “Tony Gwynn Rule,” to save lives from the toxic substance.

Here’s the Deal

When our Surgeon General says one in seven Americans will suffer from substance addiction today ...

When the economic impact of drug and alcohol addiction amounts to \$442 billion yearly ...

When National Highway Traffic Safety Administration spokesman, Mark Rosekind, asks, “As marijuana is being legalized in more and more places, what does that mean for drivers, pedestrians and law enforcement?”...

May we not be taken in by the deception of marijuana legalization. To further your understanding, I encourage you to watch the six-minute video and read chapter 29 of the Bullseye Challenge, which addresses this subject in a more in-depth way. Watch it as a family and follow it with discussion.

Be an informed influencer on this hot-button issue as you interact with people today. Talk to your children so they will stand strong amidst the pressures they’ll face. Continue to pray for the spiritual awakening for which we all long so multitudes will come to faith in Jesus and be set free from addiction today.

That Trojan horse is still out there! Don’t fall asleep. Be alert and on your guard. {eoa}