

Mr. Obama, Your Pro-Marijuana Argument Has Gone to Pot

In January, **President Obama** was asked about his views on marijuana. He opined that it is “not very different from the cigarettes that I smoked as a young person up through a big chunk of my adult life.” And, he said, “I don’t think it is more dangerous than alcohol.”

Mr. Obama was wrong. Although never safe, the type of marijuana available today has changed drastically since he inhaled as a teenager.

First, even without the alteration of its chemical composition, **marijuana** (*cannabis satiba*) is not a harmless substance, the hallucinogenic equivalent of cotton candy. According to the National Institutes of Health, marijuana “affects brain development, and when it is used heavily by young people, its effects on thinking and memory may last a long time or even be permanent. A recent study of marijuana users who began using in adolescence revealed substantially reduced connectivity among brain areas responsible for learning and memory.” Other effects include a greater likelihood of lung infections and greater risk of heart attack.

Yet these effects are compounded by the fact that the marijuana sold on the street today is a far more potent and harmful drug, with serious potential effects on human health, than it was only a couple of decades ago.

In a new study published by Family Research Council, bioethicist Dr. Donal Mathuna provides a thorough review of what marijuana is, how it can affect mind and body, and how the content of the drug has changed through the years.

Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the “primary

psychoactive ingredient" in marijuana. A psychoactive drug is "any chemical substance that affects mood, perception or consciousness as a result of changes in the functioning of the nervous system (brain and spinal cord)." The extent of these changes depends on the dose of THC, which is why the "new" marijuana is so troubling.

As Dr. Mathuna notes, "Due to cannabis cultivation, the average THC content in marijuana has increased from two percent in 1980 to 4.5 percent in 1997 to percent in 2006. A 2010 study conducted in Japan found that this average had increased to 11.2 percent, with one batch containing 22.6 percent THC. Overall, THC content is believed to range from 3 to 25 percent ... not only can marijuana lead to a large number of effects, these can vary from batch to batch because of differing concentrations of the active ingredients."

Put simply, lighting up a marijuana cigarette is not like taking an aspirin or even drinking a glass of wine. It's a chancy proposition in its own right and one made more dangerous by the unknown quantity of psychoactive components within it.

A new survey by the Barna Group finds that a strong majority of Christians oppose the **legalization of marijuana** and find it morally unacceptable. Christians have good reason to avoid marijuana: None of us can sustain the sound minds and healthy bodies God desires us to have when we place ourselves under the controlling influence of something other than His Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 charges believers not to be drunk with wine, but rather to be "filled" with the Holy Spirit. Paul thus infers concern that just as the Holy Spirit would fill every area of our beings, wine can do the same thing, thereby usurping the role of God in one's life. The principle: Don't let anything but the Spirit of God control your thinking and acting.

Throughout Scripture, self-control is presented as one of the chief characteristics of the godly person (e.g., Titus 2:11-14; Galatians 5:22-23). A person under the control of anything other than the Spirit of God, be it alcohol, marijuana or any drug that removes our ability to think coherently and respond honorably to the Lord, is an idol and a dangerous replacement of the work of the Spirit and the Word in our lives.

Smoking pot has never been wise and now is even more imprudent than it was when many of us were teenagers. Saying it is essentially harmless doesn't make it so, whether that opinion is issued by a politician or a pusher on the street corner.

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