

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs Assemblies of God USA

This A/G Perspective reflects commonly held beliefs based on Scripture which have been endorsed by the church's Commission on Doctrinal Purity and the Executive Presbytery.

Why have holiness and Pentecostal churches advocated abstinence concerning the use of alcohol, tobacco, and narcotics (drugs)? Why not allow moderation?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 has historically been held in high regard by holiness and Pentecostal Christians. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." This and other passages warning against drunkenness have been considered sufficient reason for advocating complete abstinence from the use of alcohol, tobacco, or narcotics. Not only is the human body the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is not to be defiled; but there are other reasons for complete abstinence:

1. Contemporary society is plagued with the destructive consequences of these three addictive substances, and
2. Even moderate use of the substances, especially alcohol and drugs, leads too often to destructive addictive habits.

Alcohol

The Scriptures speak often of the destructive power of alcohol. Noah's drunkenness brought shame to his family (Gen 9:20-27). Lot's drunkenness resulted in an incestuous relationship with his two daughters (Gen 19:30-38). An inebriated Xerxes sought to humiliate Queen Vashti publicly (Est 1:9-22). The consumption of alcohol impairs judgment, inflames passions, and invites violence (Lev 10:8-11; Pr 20:1, 23:29-35, 31:4-5).

Alcoholism and the depression associated with it often leads to a breakdown of moral inhibitions, indiscreet or violent behavior, or loss of consciousness (drunkenness). Long-term drinking can terminally damage the liver, pancreas, brain, or heart. Binge drinking on university campuses has caused instant death. It is estimated there are 14 million problem drinkers in the United States. Half of fatal automobile accidents are caused by alcohol-impaired drivers. The annual cost of alcohol-related accidents, illness, violent crime, and loss of work time is estimated to exceed \$100 billion.

Illegal Drugs

Though drug use is not specifically mentioned in the Bible, its impact on the drug user and on society far exceeds the evil results of alcohol abuse. The addictive nature of certain drugs is so powerful that a single episode can hook an individual for life. Furthermore, the irreversible physical damage to one's organs and mental capacities makes drugs extremely dangerous. The greatest danger is the all-consuming control of one's life, constantly interrupting one's focus on work and destroying personal relationships and spiritual well-being. Beyond the personal toll of drug addiction is the disastrous burden placed on families and society.

Alcohol and illegal drug use are well-documented factors in domestic violence, road and work rage, child abuse, suicide, and a variety of other socially destructive behaviors. Alcoholism and drug addiction present a national crisis threatening to destroy the fabric of our society.

Tobacco

While smoking and chewing tobacco does not impair one's judgment or carry many of the relational side effects of alcohol and illegal drugs, tobacco has now proved to be a primary health concern. Yet young people year after year are becoming hooked on the habit through effective ad campaigns that deceptively associate smoking with maturity and popularity.

For many years the Surgeon General of the United States has warned society of the dangers of smoking, even to the point of forcing tobacco companies to place the warning on their products. But not until the casualties of mouth and lung cancer and addiction to tobacco began to increase did people take the warning seriously. When it became evident that non-smokers were becoming victims of diseases caused by inhaling second-hand tobacco smoke, then

society began mounting major opposition to the use of tobacco. While medical studies in recent years have shown conclusively that smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer, the church has opposed the use of tobacco because it is a habit that is harmful to a Christian's testimony as well as to a Christian's body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

With these realities about alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, the argument for abstinence is well established. The Christian is called to a higher standard of self-control and self-denial concerning those things not beneficial to his physical and spiritual well-being. To argue for any level of "moderate use" of alcohol, narcotics, or tobacco is to be insensitive to the weight of Scripture and the present perils of our society. Christians realize the pressing need for a pure testimony before our world. As the apostle Paul said, "I urge you...in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom 12:1-2).

Concerns

The use of alcohol, narcotics, and tobacco mentioned above exact a heavy toll, not only on the addicted person but also on all of society. Drug abuse can make an addict incapable of being a productive individual in the larger society, thus increasing the financial burden on the rest of society. Medical treatment for injuries and illnesses caused by the addictions further consumes resources that could be put to much better use. And as drug abuse often leads to criminal activity, society pays a double cost in added insurance and law enforcement costs. **We call upon all of society to fight these addictive substances used by Satan to keep individuals in bondage to his power over their lives.**