

## Substance Abuse, Is There Hope?

The bible is clear, there is hope for all who humbly seek the Lord ( Deut. 4: 29; 2 Chron.7: 14). Having a solid spiritual foundation is an essential help for those who are caught and imprisoned in the web of substance abuse.

Just what do we mean with “substance abuse”? It’s really quite a broad term that covers addiction to, or inappropriate use of, a chemical substance to alter one’s mental, emotional or physical state. Such a substance is usually ingested orally, injected intravenously or inhaled.

That doesn’t mean those who are involved in substance abuse will always end up being addicted to the same. Yet it invariably damages one’s health, because the substances are usually extremely toxic and o, so, dangerous!

There are different categories of substance abuse such as drugs, alcohol and tobacco. According to a study of “The costs of alcohol, illegal drugs and tobacco in Canada 2002 “ published in The American Journal of Public Health<sup>1</sup> the following facts came to light:

Overall, it was estimated that there were 4,258 net deaths attributable to alcohol, 1,695 deaths attributable to illegal drugs, and 37,209 deaths attributable to tobacco in Canada in 2002.

As well,

In 2002, 761,638 criminal offences were attributable to alcohol abuse (corresponding to 30.4% of total of criminal offences in 2002 in Canada) and 554,131 (22.1%) criminal offences were

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<sup>1</sup> available at [www.webmd.com/mental-health/addiction/substance\\_abuse](http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/addiction/substance_abuse)

attributable to the use of illegal drugs. *it is estimated that cost of substance abuse totalled almost \$40 billion in Canada in 2002 or \$1,267 per capita.*

One need not be an expert in statistics analysis to realize that drug abuse is an enormous problem in this country . But then, that figure of \$ 40 billion doesn't account for all the misery caused by substance abuse. It does take in an estimate of the cost of productivity losses as well as direct healthcare costs and that of incarceration of those guilty of some crime associated with substance abuse. Yet it only reveals part of the cumulative loss to this country and its citizens.

How does one measure the agony in individuals' lives of those who are 'hooked' on alcohol, illicit drugs, etc. What about the tragedy of the strain on family life, as well as the broken relationships that result among those who are caught in a vicious cycle of dependence, withdrawal, and repeated falls into the same miserable condition.

Now it is so that the bible doesn't disapprove of moderate drinking of alcoholic beverages. Yet it strongly warns against and condemns drunkenness ( 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:18). It also doesn't specifically address the misery of the illicit use of drugs. Yet it does refer to what it calls "*the lust of the flesh*" as simply a description of some out-of-control desire ( Galatians 5:16).

So, while the bible doesn't mention Marijuana, cannabis, peyote, magic mushroom, or acid ( LSD) and nothing is said about huffing, snorting, dropping, smoking, shooting licking or other means of ingesting drugs it doesn't mean that the Lord God condones the use of what are called " recreational drugs."

What we do find is many warnings about those who would cause others to leave the safe and secure path of living a law-abiding and God-glorifying life. In speaking about wicked people who "*entice unsteady souls*" ( 2 Peter 2: 14b), the apostle Peter says that while they promise people freedom, " They themselves are slaves of

corruption. For whatever overcomes a person to that he is enslaved” ( v. 19).

It is so, many have argued that marijuana doesn't warrant prohibition nor arrest of those who are caught with only a small amount of the drug. It is even so that more and more countries allow “recreational drug use” .

Marijuana may be the least harmful of all the drugs yet it is still potentially lethal. There is the possible fatal risk of lung cancer, and emphysema. There are the negative physiological consequences including damage to the reproductive system.

The Lord God did not create our amazingly intricate bodies that we might treat these as mere playthings. He lays claim to our bodies and it is even so that he desires to live right inside of us by his Holy Spirit . In 1 Corinthians 3:16 the apostle Paul issues a grave warning. He told his readers to realize they are God's temple and that His Holy Spirit dwelt in them. Then he said, “ *If anyone destroys God's temple God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy and you are that temple.*” But then in ch. 6:19 he adds, “ *You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*”

What does that mean but that caring for our health is not just a matter of good stewardship. It really is a matter of standing in awe of what God will do. In the way of faith, and of surrendering, not to the bottle, the needle, and the powerful urge to lose your mind in the unreal world of drug abuse the Lord says, “ *Come to me, and surrender to me.*” “*Trust that I can help you with this not-so-easy task of living. Of living, rightly, positively, and not shamelessly, irresponsibly and to the detriment of yourself and others*” ( see Titus 2:12).

To do this, you need help. The first one to turn to is this gracious God who does not reject and turn away those who come to him on bended knee. He already knows how jolt is with you and me so you don't need to put up some artificial guard and pretend there is no problem.

Those who have worked with others addicted to alcohol and other drugs will tell you the first thing required is honesty and wholehearted admittance that you can't solve this problem on your own.

The bible repeatedly tells us that there is that formidable adversary called the devil or Satan who would like nothing better than to see that we utterly go to pieces. It's his way of trying to get back at Jesus who aeon that amazing victory over him on Calvary's cross. Will you and I be sober and withstand the powerful urges to take that drink or that pill or needle when we know it will do us a lot of harm?

A very powerful defence is prayer. Genuine, constant, wholehearted prayer. Laying one's soul bare before the Lord and asking him for immediate help as well as for longer term courage.

Though that is very, very important there is also the help of agencies specifically designed to help those who problem drinkers, and drug abusers. There is not only AA but there are Christian Counselling Services. You'll need to seek support from those who commit their lives and their programs of assistance to the Lord according to his Word They can be instrumental in beginning to remove this burden that's beating down on you.

There's also that wonderfully positive command of the Holy Spirit Himself in Romans 12: 21. Though the context there is not substance abuse and its pool of sorrows there is a strong emphasis on hating what is evil and holding tight to what is good ( ch. 12: 9, 10). In that context we read, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

What might that mean for you if you've been used to visit crack houses, and linger in sight of the liquor store? What does it mean when your friends call on you to join them for another alcohol and drug parade? Stand up in the strength of the Lord who will give you the courage to say "NO" to what amounts to an invitation to sin and to

harm yourself. Say “YES” to the Lord and, one small step ( which at the same time may be a large leap!) at a time get on Victory Road. Seek out the fellowship of those who want to live in the way of the Lord. There are faithful churches that have bible-based programs to deal with alcohol and drug dependencies. Walking God’s road with others ,will surely give you, D.V., a lasting taste of what it means to be *“more than victorious.”*

Amen, and may the Lord be with you.