

Stupid Pot – Why not legalize recreational marijuana?

I was overcome with concern yesterday as I listened to an hour-long radio program hosted live at the new Vancouver, WA store “Main Street Marijuana.” The hype and the positivity about the legalization of recreational pot was deeply painful for me in a very personal way.

In my early teen years I experimented with dope, as did many of my friends, which led me into numerous seductive environments and experiences. It was all so much fun at first... the allure of feeling “grown up” by smoking and getting high... the sensation of independence from authority... the rock music culture, with power concerts and free drugs. It was all so seductive and enticing.

The memories of that utterly stupid time in my life all come crashing back into my mind when I hear the ridiculously naïve reports about the importance of legalizing marijuana.

Here are some of my random thoughts which arrive in my mind within nano-seconds...

1. Marijuana is a gateway drug. Proponents of safe pot use are so quick to reject this truth as old fashioned and uninformed. That’s just simply deceptive. To a 13-year old, pot was the perfect gateway drug. But it wasn’t a gateway because of its addictive nature. It was a gateway because of its culture. Where there is pot, there is always others stuff. Just in my short, 2-year experience during the stupid years, I was introduced to and tried: cigarettes, alcohol, amphetamines, inhalants and cocaine. And that was just my experience as a 13-year old, 8th grade student in a suburban grade school. And I appropriately hid my experimentation from anyone whose opinion really mattered to me.

But let me say again, I first came into contact with this subculture of people via my desire to experiment with pot... because pot was “harmless.”

2. Pot use perpetuates drug culture. My first purchase of dope was a clandestine meeting in the janitor’s closet of my grade school. I had been told that the janitor was dealing and I could get whatever I wanted for the right price. I arranged a meeting with him (in the closet), and the deal was done. I was 13 years old, for goodness sake! And he was an adult (at least by age). He encouraged me to buy the pot, and then to consider purchasing other drugs from him, as well. So the point isn’t that the meeting was clandestine. The point is that this adult had an agenda. His agenda was for me to enjoy the experience so that he could sell me more the next time. And if I would try harder drugs, then all the better.

Legalizing marijuana sounds like such a great economic idea. The state will benefit because of the taxes earned. The drug smugglers from Mexico and elsewhere will be run out of town. And, to top it off, legal pot sales will create new jobs. Unfortunately, what will also happen is that more and more people will be sucked into a culture that encourages drug use and addiction and a new dependent economy will be developed, akin to bars, strip clubs and the lottery. So, yay! It’s legal now. You are legally in bondage to yet another substance.

3. Smoking dope is self-serving. If the above two dynamics occur surrounding the simple participation with smoking dope are true (and my personal experience has shown me they are), then any promotion of this drug, whether legal or illegal is simply self-serving. It is self-serving because harm to others is intrinsic in its nature. Drug dispensaries like Main Street Marijuana in Vancouver, WA say it’s harmless if used in the privacy of your own home. *But it is never that simple.* Friends are influenced, family is influenced, children are influenced by even the slightest remark or the mildest comment. And as that door is opened, others are invited in. In my experience, people who use dope or any other kind of mind altering drug can’t stay silent about it. They sing its praises. They tell others of their experience. And when they do, they harm them. They harm them. It’s selfish. The American Way. Moral concern is subordinated to free choice.

All of the above I write without once quoting a Bible verse... and I’m a pastor. But just for good measure, this should suffice: “... the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been

bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 1:18-20) Putting mind altering drugs into our bodies is like pouring mud on the altar of a church. Our bodies are a temple! We should take care of them. So why is the government in the business of helping us ruin them? It makes me wonder what the true interest of the government is.

When I was 14, the stupid years thankfully ended. I met a young girl who invited me to church. I had no interest in church or God or Jesus. I only went to be with her. But I discovered something right away that was wonderfully different from the drug culture I had gotten mixed up with. I discovered people who truly cared and didn't just want me for my money. And what I found amongst these people was a Spirit of joy... capital "S". It was God's Spirit. They quickly told me about how much God loved me; He loved me so much He was willing to die for me on the cross.

So ended the stupid years... thanks only to God. And no thanks to the drug peddling, self-absorbed nut-cases that say a little bit of sin is okay. A little pot. A little buzz. Just a little. It will be okay.

Just one bite of the apple.