

Reference: VARIOUS

Church: GRACE

Date: 07/23/06

Lifestyle Issues – Part 2

Purpose: To establish a Biblical Approach to Contemporary Lifestyle issues

1. Introduction

Last week, drew out Biblical Principles to help with lifestyle issues

This week, begin with drug-taking

Is drug-taking good or bad?

Will attempt to draw out Biblical principles

There is a lot of woolly thinking around, so we need to think carefully

2. What is a drug?

This is important to establish

We need to be very precise here or our arguments will be weak

1 a *obsolete* : a substance used in dyeing or chemical operations

b : a substance used as a medication or in the preparation of medication

c *according to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act*

(1) : a substance recognized in an official pharmacopoeia or formulary

(2) : a substance intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease

(3) : a substance other than food intended to affect the structure or function of the body

(4) : a substance intended for use as a component of a medicine but not a device or a component, part, or accessory of a device

2 : a commodity that is not salable or for which there is no demand — used in the phrase *drug on the market*

3 : something and often an illegal substance that causes addiction, habituation, or a marked change in consciousness

There are at least three kinds of drugs

“Food drugs” such as caffeine in coffee, tea, chocolate, or the hallucinogen in nutmeg

“Medicinal drugs” such as aspirin, ibuprofen, morphine, cancer treatment agents

“Recreational drugs” such as crack cocaine, meth etc

3. Food drugs

Clearly, we need to be informed in order to live godly lives

But the information must be objective and valid

Not quack science – there is a lot in this area!

There are hundreds of food “drugs” (see Appendix)

Some religions rule out stimulants

But if the principle is carried to its logical extreme

We could hardly eat or drink anything!

- Myristicin and elemicin are believed to be the chemical constituents responsible for the subtle hallucinogenic properties of nutmeg oil
- Caffeine in tea, coffee, soda, chocolate
- Oats reduce cholesterol
- Phenylethylamine is found in chocolate. It's related to amphetamines, which are strong stimulants. In addition to caffeine, theobromine, and a neurotransmitter called anandamide have been isolated in chocolate
- Many plants, particularly legumes, produce a range of sterols, isoflavonoids, and lignans with moderate to weak or antagonistic estrogenic activities.
- Quinine in bitter lemon and Indian tonic water

In practice, we cannot avoid all of them.

What are the principles that apply?

3.1. Be Holy?

Yes to a degree, taken as separation from the world

This world sometimes revels in declaring dependence on coffee and other stimulants

Should the believer do this?

3.2. Preserve Life?

Quite a few of the food drugs are taken for this reason – cholesterol reduction etc.

3.3. Enjoy all things with thanksgiving?

Yes to a degree – though we should probably be thankful for the foods rather than the drugs they contain

3.4. Be content with what you have?

Yes to a degree, if we are taking foods in order to cope better with difficult circumstances

We may want to search for deeper issues that are manifesting themselves in a dependence on food drugs (chocolate, coffee)

3.5. Don't be mastered by anything?

Certainly. Caffeine is addictive

Small doses are a stimulant, large doses a depressant

Can crave certain foods – perhaps for drugs they contain

We are to have but One Master

3.6. Steward your body?

Yes – certainly. An excess of coffee or chocolate will have harmful side-effects

We may not then be good stewards of the bodies we have been given, which are temples of the Holy Spirit.

3.7. Christian liberty but not license for sin?

Yes to a degree. There is no law against eating chocolate

But gorging on chocolate is sinful

We cannot use the freedom we have to excuse that sin

3.8. Weaker brother?

Yes – we should be careful in discussion and in behaviour

We don't want to lead a weaker brother or sister into sin:

Go on – have another cup of coffee/piece of chocolate – it'll do you good!

3.9. Submit to authorities instituted by God?

Not many foods are regulated against – little apparent application

3.10. What's the bottom line?

Eat with thanksgiving and enjoy!

Be aware of the issues here

Watch out for any tendency to be mastered

For harmful side affects on the body

Consider any deeper issues that show themselves in eating habits

Watch how we talk with others (in the world and in the church) about known drugs in food

4. Medical Drugs

This covers everything from taking aspirin for a headache

Melatonin for jet-lag, sleeping tablets, antibiotics

To sophisticated anti-cancer treatments

Some are so common we can take them without thinking

But we do need to think about this and then apply principles

In practice, the reason we are taking the drug will play into the Biblical view we should have

To treat a medical condition – aspirin, ibuprophen, beta blockers for blood pressure

To prevent a medical condition – contraception, prophylactic aspirin, cholesterol medication

To increase abilities/aptitudes – steroids, caffeine to stay awake and alert longer

The type of drug we are taking will also affect which principles apply – some are more additive than others, for example

Need to be cautious about the fringes – dietary supplements and herbal remedies that are not well understood and are not regulated in the same way as drugs

What principles apply?

4.1. Be Holy?

We would avoid some drugs on this basis

e.g. some newer forms of contraception

We may also want to consider use of tranquilizers to deal with crises in life – can be common in the world
Our source of peace and rest in the world should not primarily come from tablets
However, mental illnesses are a reality and we need to be careful in our judgments in this area

4.2. Preserve Life?

The principle certainly applies
In preventative medicine as well as curative
Also in terms of not destroying life (again, some forms of contraception)

4.3. Enjoy all things with thanksgiving?

We can certainly be thankful for the range and effectiveness of medicines that we have available to us
Not sure we will always enjoy them!

4.4. Be content with what you have?

Would certainly apply in the area of performance-enhancing drugs in the sports world
And some of the miracle supplements advertised exclusively on TV for body building, weight loss, hair loss etc.

4.5. Don't be mastered by anything?

Again – certainly applies in (e.g.) case of sleeping medications which can create dependency – need to be aware and very cautious
Morphine also as a very potent pain killer

4.6. Steward your body?

Very much applies – we should always be seeking to be good stewards
Overdosing or being careless is not an option
e.g. TB patients not finishing the course of antibiotics

4.7. Christian liberty but not license for sin?

Certainly applies in general terms

4.8. Weaker brother?

We do need to exercise caution
We shouldn't readily recommend medications we use to others i.e. brands of sleeping pills etc.
Or give them some of our prescription meds
We do not know their medical history, negative reaction to some types of drug, propensity to become dependant etc.
Well intentioned acts can have unfortunate consequences

4.9. Submit to authorities instituted by God

Some medications are certainly illegal (medical use of marijuhana in many states)
Perhaps medicines that are legal elsewhere but not in the US and have been imported
Sometimes, but probably rarely, this principle is a consideration

4.10. What's the bottom line?

This is a complex situation.
The principles do help provide a framework
Must be applied understanding the type of drug being used and the reason for its use.
In many cases, we should be thankful that there are medicines available to treat/prevent conditions
We still need to exercise discretion and weaker brother principle

5. "Recreational" Drugs

Using this phrase to talk of drugs such as Crack, Meth, Majihuana, Heroin etc. that are not taken because of any medical need but for the sensation or experience they create. Would also include food drugs (e.g. nutmeg oil) specifically taken for this purpose.
Smoking and drinking alcohol also fall under this heading strictly, but we will deal with them separately in later lessons.
What principles apply here?

5.1. Be Holy?

Certainly –so much of the world uses drugs for escape
The believer needs no such artificial escapes –
Rather is enabled to live for Christ in the strength He gives
In addition, we need to generally avoid substances that inhibit
higher levels of thinking and of self-control – easier to sin when
under their influence.

5.2. Preserve Life?

Certainly applies, since such drugs often have negative and
potentially lethal effects for the taker

5.3. Enjoy all things with thanksgiving?

Application will depend somewhat on the nature of the substance.
Often, this principle will not apply, being overridden by others

5.4. Be content with what you have?

Certainly applies – drugs offer an escape from reality and one
reason to take them is discontent with current circumstances

5.5. Don't be mastered by anything?

Certainly applies – all recreational drugs are addictive to one
degree or another

5.6. Steward your body?

Certainly applies – most recreational drugs have negative
consequences for the body

5.7. Christian liberty but not license for sin?

Will certainly apply for those few drugs which are legal and where
there may be no over-riding arguments preventing their use by a
Christian – all have the potential to end in sin if not taken
moderately.

5.8. Weaker brother?

Shouldn't apply in most cases, since believers shouldn't be
indulging in most recreational drugs anyway.
Certainly applies for those few legal drugs that may fall in the area
of Christian liberty

5.9. Submit to authorities instituted by God

Will often apply, because most of these drugs are illegal

6. Conclusions

This is a complex area and hopefully this study has been helpful
Without a Biblical framework, we would be at sea
It would be very hard to make consistent and well grounded
decisions on issues.

We have seen that our views on this issue will depend on:

The type of drug in question

Food, Medicine, Recreational

Potentially addictive or not

The motivation for our taking it

For healing/prevention/enhancement

For recreation

We may not have all the principles here that a detailed
consideration of the issues would require but we have outlined and
approach which will be valuable.

Appendix – examples of food “drugs”

Class/Components	Source*	Potential Benefit
Carotenoids		
Beta-carotene	carrots, various fruits	neutralizes free radicals which may damage cells; bolsters cellular antioxidant defenses
Lutein, Zeaxanthin	kale, collards, spinach, corn, eggs, citrus	may contribute to maintenance of healthy vision
Lycopene	tomatoes and processed tomato products	may contribute to maintenance of prostate health
Dietary (functional and total) Fiber		
Insoluble fiber	wheat bran	may contribute to maintenance of a healthy digestive tract
Beta glucan**	oat bran, rolled oats, oat flour	may reduce risk of coronary heart disease (CHD)
Soluble fiber**	psyllium seed husk	may reduce risk of CHD
Whole grains**	cereal grains	may reduce risk of CHD and cancer; may contribute to maintenance of healthy blood glucose levels
Fatty Acids		
Monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs)	tree nuts	may reduce risk of CHD
Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) - Omega-3 fatty acids—ALA	walnuts, flax	may contribute to maintenance of mental and visual function
PUFAs - Omega-3 fatty acids—DHA/EPA	salmon, tuna, marine and other fish oils	may reduce risk of CHD; may contribute to maintenance of mental and visual function

PUFAs - Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA)	beef and lamb; some cheese	may contribute to maintenance of desirable body composition and healthy immune function
Flavonoids		
Anthocyanidins	berries, cherries, red grapes	bolster cellular antioxidant defenses; may contribute to maintenance of brain function
Flavanols—Catechins, Epicatechins, Procyanidins	tea, cocoa, chocolate, apples, grapes	may contribute to maintenance of heart health
Flavanones	citrus foods	neutralize free radicals which may damage cells; bolster cellular antioxidant defenses
Flavonols	onions, apples, tea, broccoli	neutralize free radicals which may damage cells; bolster cellular antioxidant defenses
Proanthocyanidins	cranberries, cocoa, apples, strawberries, grapes, wine, peanuts, cinnamon	may contribute to maintenance of urinary tract health and heart health
Isothiocyanates		
Sulforaphane	cauliflower, broccoli, broccoli sprouts, cabbage, kale, horseradish	may enhance detoxification of undesirable compounds and bolster cellular antioxidant defenses
Phenols		
Caffeic acid, Ferulic acid	apples, pears, citrus fruits, some vegetables	may bolster cellular antioxidant defenses; may contribute to maintenance of healthy vision and heart health

Plant Stanols/Sterols		
Free Stanols/Sterols**	corn, soy, wheat, wood oils, fortified foods and beverages	may reduce risk of CHD
Stanol/Sterol esters**	fortified table spreads, stanol ester dietary supplements	may reduce risk of CHD
Polyols		
Sugar alcohols—xylitol, sorbitol, mannitol, lactitol	some chewing gums and other food applications	may reduce risk of dental caries
Prebiotic/Probiotics		
Inulin, Fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS), Polydextrose	whole grains, onions, some fruits, garlic, honey, leeks, fortified foods and beverages	may improve gastrointestinal health; may improve calcium absorption
Lactobacilli, Bifidobacteria	yogurt, other dairy and non-dairy applications	may improve gastrointestinal health and systemic immunity
Phytoestrogens		
Isoflavones—Daidzein, Genistein	soybeans and soy-based foods	may contribute to maintenance of bone health, healthy brain and immune function; for women, maintenance of menopausal health
Lignans	flax, rye, some vegetables	may contribute to maintenance of heart health and healthy immune function
Soy Protein		
Soy Protein**	soybeans and soy-based foods	may reduce risk of CHD

Sulfides/Thiols		
Diallyl sulfide, Allyl methyl trisulfide	garlic, onions, leeks, scallions	may enhance detoxification of undesirable compounds; may contribute to maintenance of heart health and healthy immune function
Dithiolthiones	cruciferous vegetables	contribute to maintenance of healthy immune function
*Examples are not an all-inclusive list. **FDA approved health claim established for component.		