



Preparing for Small Group: Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
- (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
- (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
- (4) What does God want me to know?
- (5) What does God want me to do?

“Hot Topics: Legalized Marijuana”

1 Peter 1:13, 4:7, 5:8

Exploring the issue of legalized marijuana.

1. Read Gen. 1:29. How is this verse used by some to argue for legalized marijuana?
2. What is proof texting? Discuss how using Gen. 1:29 to argue for legalized marijuana is an example of proof texting.
3. Read Gen. 3:17-19. What is the context for these verses? How do they relate to Gen. 1:29?
4. Read Gen. 9:20-24. How did Noah misuse or abuse what God had given mankind for good? Are there any applications of this when it comes to the issue of legalized marijuana?

Main Point: Believers are commanded to keep a sober mind.

Just a few of the reasons why God commands a sober mind:

A sober mind is essential for experiencing hope today in God’s grace for eternity (1:13).

The “therefore” in verse 13 connects this verse to the preceding verses, which introduce the reader to the fact that even suffering serves a purpose in sanctification, connected to growing and maturing faith (1 Pet. 5:6-7). Because of the salvation that we have and that we will receive in Jesus, Peter called on believers to be ready for action with a clear and sober mind. Why? Because a sober mind was essential to making the decision to set one’s hope in the ultimate grace of God that believers have and will enjoy to the fullest in the return of Jesus Christ. Moving on to 1 Pet. 1:14-25, Peter continues to layout the demands of sanctification and obedience in the life of a believer, which all require a sober, calm, circumspect mind for a sober, clear commitment to the Lord. Even in the midst of suffering, it isn’t the time to check out from reality; it’s the time to check in with God. It’s in God’s grace and our ultimate hope in Jesus that we find the most important things we need for everything we face in life.

1. Read 1 Pet. 1:1-12. What are some of the key things that God’s Word emphasizes in these verses. How does verse 13 connect to these verses?
2. While Peter isn’t addressing drunkenness or marijuana use in using “sober-minded” in verse 13, how does verse 13 still argue against the believer using anything recreationally that would compromise alertness and clear thinking?
3. How does checking out with mind-altering substances work against setting “your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ?”

A sober mind is essential for experiencing the power of prayer (4:7).

From 1 Pet. 1:14-2:12, Peter pointed to the incredible identity that believers have as recipients of God's grace in Jesus Christ, culminating in the declaration that believers are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession..." (1 Pet. 2:9). In considering a believer's identity, blessings, and calling because of Jesus, Peter exhorted believers to live their lives in response to their identity as God's people. In 1 Pet. 2:13-4:6, Peter laid out general and specific responses to God's call to holiness and obedience. There's an urgency to this pursuit in a believer's life, which Peter reminded readers of in 1 Peter 4:7. The reality is that the "end of all things is at hand." This world is not the end-all and be-all. Like the nation of Israel, believers today are on a journey to their Promised Land: The new heaven and new earth. The journey is difficult. The need for God is desperate, and a sober mind is essential for effective prayer with God, which is essential for effective living in the power of God.

1. Do you live your life like "the end of all things is at hand?" In what ways does your perspective and priorities need to change to align to this truth that God wants you to know?
2. For the believer, how do the commands to be "self-controlled" and to be "sober-minded" factor into the debate on the use of legalized marijuana? How would you discuss this with someone arguing for the use of marijuana (or the abuse of alcohol), etc.?
3. Do you really believe in the power and the necessity of prayer? How would impairment of your connection with reality — of any kind — impact prayer?
4. Who do you need to pray for right now? Who needs God's grace and victory in a sober mind?

A sober mind is essential for defending against the attack of the enemy (5:8).

For the third time, Peter called his readers to be sober minded. In 1 Pet. 5:7, believers are called on to cast their anxieties on the Lord rather than to try to escape from their anxieties, and in the second half of 1 Pet. 5:8, Peter pointed to another reason why believers should be sober-minded and watchful, which is because of the work of the enemy in trying to attack and destroy. The reality of the spiritual battle in this world demands that believers stay alert and sober, reducing their vulnerabilities and increasing their resistance to attack. The importance of this third and final plea for maintaining a sober mind is seen in the placement of this command in the book, coming at the end of the book and closing the final, major section of Peter's letter. Because of the spiritual battle that's real, a sober mind is really needed to protect believers from the attacks of the enemy.

1. Read 1 Pet. 5:6-11. Discuss the overall message in these closing verses. How does the command to stay sober-minded fit into this passage?
2. Does anyone have a testimony of how drug or alcohol use led to vulnerability to the attack of the enemy in his/her life? Share, and discuss. Do you know anyone who is struggling with this now in his/her life? Pray for them right now.
3. In looking at the issue of legalized marijuana in our nation, how is the enemy using this to attack? How could you talk about this spiritual reality and argue for the biblical perspective on this issue in a loving but uncompromising way?