

STONE-COLD CRAZY

THE DANGERS OF LEGAL MARIJUANA

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Stone-Cold Crazy: The Dangers of Legal Marijuana

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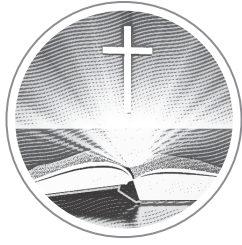


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Stone-Cold Crazy: The Dangers of Legal Marijuana



“States rush to legalize recreational marijuana, even as evidence of its harm grows.” Thus reads the headline of a recent *City Journal* article. I share the headline’s warning about growing evidence of harm because I am concerned that the harms are not sufficiently appreciated, and I write to make a broad-based case against recreational marijuana use. I am a Christian pastor and a father of five adult children concerned about the passive, often positive posture many in the church have taken on this topic. Most Christians opposed to marijuana use merely cite its intoxicating effects. They then compare it to the Bible’s opposition to drunkenness. But this woefully understates the harmful consequences of using this drug. Being an intoxicant is insufficient to restrain or prohibit usage of this drug. In this booklet I aim to make a case against use of marijuana in our society and particularly among Christians. The reasons which I will discuss for why anyone, but especially Christians, should oppose marijuana use are historical, pharmacological, medical, psychological/psychiatric, legal/criminal, commercial, social—and certainly spiritual.

This is not an academic matter for me. I confess to having been a heavy drug user in my days before faith in Christ. I write therefore “from the inside,” if you will, as one well aware of what marijuana usage and the culture surrounding it entails. However, the marijuana of today is definitely not the marijuana of days gone by (the 1960s and 1970s). We are no longer talking about “Woodstock Weed.” Today’s marijuana is much more potent and hence much more dangerous. Please consider the following.

HISTORICAL

Contemporary researchers are not the first to note the dangers of marijuana. The danger has been recognized previously in Mexico and India. In 2012 Isaac Campos wrote *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs*. His research on the history of marijuana use in Mexico found hundreds of articles reporting marijuana users to be prone to violence and self-injury. When used in large doses it produced hallucinations, excitement, and loss of inhibitions leading to “delirium indistinguishable from insanity and often accompanied by violence.”¹ Eventually Mexico banned the sale of marijuana along with cocaine and other opiates in March 1920, calling it “one of the most pernicious manias of our people.”

India also had a history with marijuana, there called ganja and charas (which is like hashish²). By the 1860s doctors had noted a connection between cannabis, insanity, and violence. The earliest published report was in December 1873. What followed was a long-documented history of this relationship detailing, consistently over a period of 50 years, that “at least 1 in 5 patients in Indian mental hospitals had cannabis linked illness.”³

Medical consequences like those in Mexico and India were early indications that marijuana was much more dangerous than we have been led to believe. Modern research and reporting have confirmed what was seen in Mexico and India and have added further medical concerns.

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- 1 Alex Berenson, *Tell Your Children: The Truth about Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence* (New York: Free Press, 2019), 5. Alex Berenson is a former *New York Times* investigative reporter and award-winning novelist whose book is deeply researched and meticulously written. His wife is a psychiatrist who specializes in evaluating mentally ill criminals. It was her initial observation connecting marijuana usage to insanity and violence that sparked Berenson's interest. If his research work demonstrates anything it is that marijuana is not medicine but a dangerous drug.
 - 2 Hashish, or hash, is a *drug* made from the *resin* of the *cannabis* plant. It is consumed by smoking a small piece, typically in a pipe, *bong*, *vaporizer*, or *joint*, or via oral *ingestion*.
 - 3 Berenson, *Tell Your Children*, 15.

PHARMACOLOGICAL

It is important to distinguish the chemical composition of marijuana. It contains both CBD (cannabidiol) and THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). The former is not psychoactive while the latter is, that is, CBD does not get users high while THC most definitely does. CBD is promoted for its medicinal benefits, but it should not be confused with THC.

The potency of THC is critical, as is the frequency of usage. In the 1970s most marijuana consumed in the USA contained less than 2% THC.⁴ Today the marijuana sold at legal dispensaries contains 25% THC, a significant increase. In certain products the potency is even higher. Many users prefer extracts that are nearly pure. “Wax” and “Shatter” are forms of butane hashish oil designed to be vaped and approach near 100% THC.⁵ Certain extracts for inhaling have THC concentration of more than 65%.⁶ You cannot smoke a joint (a marijuana cigarette) and NOT be stoned. Therefore, it is not comparable to having a drink or two, which does not render the user drunk.

Furthermore, users of marijuana tend to use more of the drug than the average drinker uses alcohol. It is estimated that only 1 drinker in 15 drinks daily compared with approximately 20% of all cannabis users who are daily users.⁷ Furthermore, alcohol usage is ordinarily at the end of the day. It is not unusual for marijuana users to smoke first thing in the morning and throughout the day.

Bottom line on the potency of THC? This is NOT the “Woodstock Weed” that hippies and people like me smoked in the 1960s. It is much more powerful and hence the need for greater attention to its use.

4 Berenson, *Tell Your Children*, xix.

5 Stephanie Mencimer, “This Reporter Took a Deep Look into the Science of Smoking Pot. What He Found Is Scary,” *Mother Jones*, January 5, 2019, book review of Alex Berenson, *Tell Your Children: The Truth about Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence*.

6 Malcolm Gladwell, “Is Marijuana as Safe as We Think?,” *New Yorker*, January 7, 2019.

7 Berenson, *Tell Your Children*, xix.