

IS IT OKAY FOR A CHRISTIAN TO USE MARIJUANA?

The Bible does not specifically name **marijuana** as a drug. Of course, it also doesn't mention cocaine, heroine, cigarettes, or any other addictive drug. However, if we take a look at biblical principles and apply them to our Christian walk, we can know what God's Word has to say about using marijuana.

What is marijuana?

A greenish-gray mixture of the dried, shredded leaves and flowers of *Cannabis sativa*—the hemp plant.

The main psychoactive (mind-altering) chemical in marijuana, responsible for most of the intoxicating effects sought by recreational users, is delta-9-tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC). The chemical is found in resin produced by the leaves and buds primarily of the female cannabis plant. The plant also contains more than 500 other chemicals, including over 100 compounds that are chemically related to THC, called cannabinoids.

(To read more about the effects of THC to the brain, please see pages 9-11.)

Even though the Bible does not specifically name marijuana, there are scriptures that show us why using marijuana “recreationally” is inappropriate for a Christian believer.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RECREATIONAL & MEDICAL USE?

Medical use of marijuana applies to the following:

1. Antiemetic (anti-nausea) use due to 4th stage cancer chemotherapy
2. Multiple sclerosis (last stages of life)
3. Glaucoma (terminal)
4. Analgesia (pain relief for terminal cancer patients)

Marijuana brings on an intoxicating effect and serves either as a depressant (feeling of calm) or stimulant (high energy). A prescription for medical marijuana is prescribed for the terminal patient, to ease their comfort during the last stages of life.

There are detrimental side effects, such as:

1. Short-term memory
2. Long-term cognitive function (i.e., impairment at work and school)
3. Psychiatric illness
4. Abuse and withdrawal
5. Gateway Hypothesis (two to five times more likely to use other illicit drugs)
6. Driving under the influence results in an increase in accidents
7. Hormonal dysfunction (anterior pituitary, endocrine, reproductive)
8. Risk of oral and lung cancers (risks are more than cigarette smoking)
9. Cardiovascular events leading to tachyarrhythmias, acute coronary syndrome, and vascular complications
10. Stroke

If you are using marijuana outside of the four medical uses as stated previously, then you are using marijuana recreationally.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN BELIEVER?

The original question asked is, “Is it okay for a **Christian** to use marijuana?” Let’s define “Christian.”

Some people believe they are Christians because they attend church or because their parents are Christians. But being a Christian is following Jesus. And it means more than just acknowledging him as Savior. A Christian must leave their past behind and commit their future to the Lord. They no longer live for sinful pleasure, but obedience to God.

Part of the process of following Jesus is to repent. Repentance means to turn from one's sins (selfish and bad choices) and go in the opposite direction (God’s righteousness). Jesus said that those who do not repent will perish (see Luke 13:3).

Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23 ESV). Taking up the cross means to crucify sin.

Romans 10:9 tells us, “If you **confess** with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” (ESV)

The apostle Paul quoted this Scripture from Deuteronomy 30:14 which says, “The word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may **do** it.” (ESV) Paul reiterated that if you **confess** Jesus as your Lord, and believe in Him, then you will **do** what He says.

God’s Word makes it quite clear that a “casual confession of faith” is not what makes a true believer. A Christian who *really* believes in Jesus will:

1. Repent.
2. Deny their flesh (human sinful nature).
3. Follow Jesus (by reading the Bible).
4. Do and obey what the Bible says.

Now that we have a clearer understanding of what a Christian is, we can look at the original question. If you are genuinely interested in doing God’s will, know that using marijuana will not help you to grow and mature in the Christian faith.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV)

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, **drunkard**, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

Drunkard means “someone who is habitually intoxicated” and is losing control of his or her faculties or behavior because of alcoholic drink or drug (such as marijuana).

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21 NASB)

The word *sorcery* in this verse was underlined because in biblical times sorcerers used herbal and odd concoctions to induce drug highs. In fact, the word used in the Bible for “sorcery” is *pharmakeia*, which is where we get our modern word “pharmacy.”

Clearly, using marijuana that causes a person to become “high” is a sin because it induces intoxication and an altered state of mind.

USING MARIJUANA DOES NOT GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY

Here are some other reasons why using marijuana is not glorifying to God. As a Christian, we are to deny unhealthy habits and replace them with good spiritual habits.

Using Marijuana Is:

1. Addictive. Marijuana is proven to be addictive. A quick search on Google for the phrase “I’m addicted to pot” should bring up ample results and testimonies of real people struggling with this addiction. Many rehab centers help those addicted to marijuana.

Also, there are now many MA (Marijuana Anonymous) meetings because using marijuana is considered an addiction.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor **drunkards**, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. (*If you are a believer—you don't do these things anymore*) But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
NKJV

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 1 Corinthians 6:12
NKJV

COMMON EXCUSES

Some claim that using marijuana isn't a sin and try to convince others that it is healthy and God made it for our good. Let's look at why these statements are unfounded.

1. The Bible says God gave us all herbs for our use. Some point to a verse in Genesis in which God says He gave us all the "herbs" to use. This is based on faulty logic.

The actual passage is Genesis 1:29 that reads, "And God said, 'See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it **shall be for food.**'" (NKJV) Herbs are for food.

Secondly, if marijuana is good for us, then what about thornbushes, poison ivy, poison berries, and the like? Remember, Satan also used the Scriptures deceptively when he came to Eve and said, "Did God actually say..." (Genesis 3:1) Let's not make the same mistake!

And lastly, God actually cursed the earth after the sin of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:17-18). God's original plan and purpose has been altered by our sin.

2. We are under a new covenant in Christ so we don't have to follow the commandments. Actually, Christ came to fulfill the law, and proved it's impossible in the new covenant—unless you have the Holy Spirit. If we consider the Old Testament, the seventh commandment reads, “Don't commit adultery.” Jesus told us if we look at another woman with lust we have committed adultery. Which do you think is harder to do: the Old Testament law or Jesus' clarification in the New Testament?

The new covenant is that Jesus died for our sin. *Sin* means “missing the mark.” Sin is missing God's best for your life. As shown by the evidence, using marijuana is not in a person's best interest. God actually wants to set us free from bondage, from addiction.

Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32 ESV).

3. Using marijuana relaxes me. Using marijuana may “seems” relaxing, but using marijuana leads to an addiction. It's a bad habit. It causes you to depend on it—and not God. When you are addicted to marijuana, it is spiritual idolatry. The Bible says that anything that comes before God is an idol. It's the second commandment. Clearly, smoking marijuana is a ruse and not something that relaxes.

4. Using marijuana makes me fit in. The Bible tells us we should be separate from this world. See 2 Corinthians 6:17. We are to be “IN” the world, but not “OF” the world. Using marijuana makes you “fit in” with a type of person or crowd that you should be avoiding in the first place. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33 again.

5. Using marijuana is healthy. That not only contradicts medical evidence, but since the Bible labels marijuana as sorcery, this is untrue.

HOW TO STOP USING MARIJUANA OR GET HELP

Through the power of God you can do all things, and that includes kicking a bad habit. Philippians 4:13 reads, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” If you find that you are addicted to marijuana, you owe it to God, your family, and to yourself to ask God to help you.

Some people are able to stop “cold-turkey.” If you only experimented, or occasionally used marijuana, then you may be able to stop instantly. If you find you are addicted, you should seek support from friends and family, including a local church for accountability.

There are now MA (Marijuana Anonymous) meetings and programs. We strongly encourage a Bible-based program, such as One Step To Freedom or Celebrate Recovery. Secular programs tend to lack proper accountability oversight, whereas a Bible-teaching church can disciple you.

Avoid people who encourage or condone using marijuana. If a friend tries to get you to use marijuana, he or she is NOT your friend. Any person who pressures you or entices you to do something dangerous to your health should be labeled an adversary.

Conclusion: The Bible clearly shows us that using marijuana is a sin.

COMMON SENSE

Smoking marijuana is clearly against the will of God, and it is a sinful behavior. God wants us to be healthy and have the joy of the Holy Spirit. Marijuana does not fit into that equation in any way. God warns us to avoid the dangers of drugs and inappropriate behavior that comes along with drug use.

Be smart. Follow God’s will. Trust in Him. And if you have not yet accepted Christ in your heart, I’d urge you to do so. Today is the day of your salvation. Ask Jesus to help you to stop using marijuana. You can receive forgiveness of your sins right now by repenting and turning to Jesus Christ.

God will forgive you of all of your sins if you repent and place your faith in Christ. Repenting means to never use marijuana again. It means zero tolerance. Will you do that today?

Are you a Christian who has been using marijuana, and the Holy Spirit has been convicting you? Don't let marijuana be your idol. Will you repent, and reaffirm your devotion to Christ right now with a prayer? I pray that you do.

Heavenly Father, I need Your help. I ask forgiveness for using marijuana. I don't want to do this anymore. Please help me. Please show me how to sincerely obey and please You. Please help me to rely on You completely to learn how to stop. Please help me to be open to Your Word and godly, biblical counsel from others to teach me how to stop using marijuana. Thank You for giving me Your Son Jesus Christ to forgive me of my sins when He died on the cross and resurrected. Help me to have a resurrection too, where I don't use marijuana anymore. Make me a new person too. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Excerpted from:

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/what-marijuana>
http://www.godandscience.org/doctrine/medical_marijuana_review.html

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA?

When marijuana is smoked, THC and other chemicals in the plant pass from the lungs into the bloodstream, which rapidly carries them throughout the body and to the brain. The user begins to experience their effects almost immediately. Many users experience a pleasant euphoria and a sense of relaxation. Other common effects, which may vary dramatically among different users, include heightened sensory perception (e.g., brighter colors), laughter, altered perception of time, and increased appetite.

If marijuana is consumed in foods or beverages, these effects are somewhat delayed—usually appearing after thirty minutes to one hour—since the drug must first pass through the digestive system. Eating or drinking marijuana delivers significantly less THC into the bloodstream than smoking an equivalent amount of the plant. Because of the delayed effects, users may inadvertently consume more THC than they intend to.

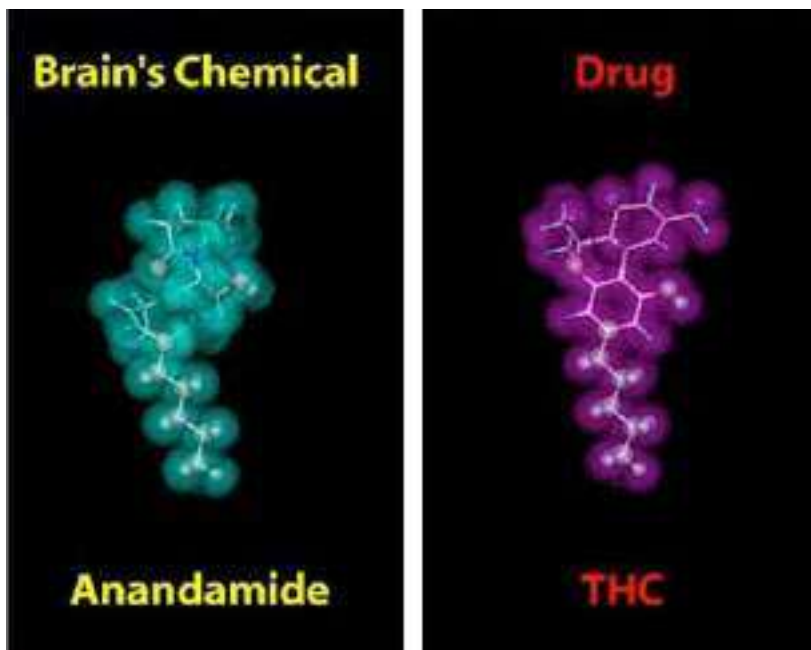
Pleasant experiences with marijuana are by no means universal. Instead of relaxation and euphoria, some users experience anxiety, fear, distrust, or panic. These effects are more

common when too much is taken, or the marijuana has an unexpectedly high potency, or a user is inexperienced.

People who have taken large doses of marijuana may experience an acute psychosis, which includes hallucinations, delusions, and a loss of the sense of personal identity. These unpleasant but temporary reactions are distinct from longer-lasting psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia, that may be associated with the use of marijuana in vulnerable individuals.

Although detectable amounts of THC may remain in the body for days or even weeks after use, the noticeable effects of smoked marijuana generally last from one to three hours. Those who have marijuana consumed in food or drink may have effects lasting for many hours.

HOW DOES MARIJUANA PRODUCE ITS EFFECTS?



THC's chemical structure is similar to the brain chemical anandamide. Similarity in structure allows drugs to be recognized by the body that alters normal brain communication.

THC and other cannabinoid chemicals in marijuana are similar to cannabinoid chemicals that naturally occur in the body. These *endogenous cannabinoids* (such as anandamide; see figure) function as *neurotransmitters* because they send chemical messages between nerve cells (*neurons*) throughout the nervous system.

They affect brain areas that influence pleasure, memory, thinking, concentration, movement, coordination, and sensory and time perception.

Because of this similarity, THC is able to attach to molecules called *cannabinoid receptors* on neurons in these brain areas and activate them, **disrupting** various mental and physical functions and causing the effects described earlier. The neural communication network that uses these cannabinoid neurotransmitters, known as the *endocannabinoid* system, plays a critical role in the nervous system's normal functioning, so **interfering with it can have profound effects.**

For example, THC is able to alter the functioning of the hippocampus and orbitofrontal cortex, brain areas that enable a person to form new memories and shift their attentional focus. **As a result, using marijuana causes impaired thinking and interferes with a user's ability to learn and to perform complicated tasks.**

THC also **disrupts** functioning of the cerebellum and basal ganglia, **brain areas that regulate balance, posture, coordination, and reaction time.**

This is the reason people who have used marijuana may not be able to drive a car safely and may be impaired at playing sports or other physical activities. Marijuana users who have taken large doses of the drug **may experience an acute psychosis**, which includes hallucinations, delusions, and a loss of the sense of personal identity.

THC, acting through cannabinoid receptors, also activates the brain's reward system, which includes regions that govern the response to healthy pleasurable behaviors like sex and eating. Like most other drugs of abuse, **THC stimulates neurons in the reward system to release the signaling chemical dopamine at levels higher than typically**

observed in response to natural stimuli. This flood of dopamine contributes to the pleasurable "high" that recreational marijuana users seek.

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/how-does-marijuana-produce-its-effects>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/what-are-marijuana-effects> courtesy of usa.gov