

What About Smoking?

By Pastor Tom Hooper

Dearest Brothers, Sisters and Friends, it is my desire and goal to address a very important and much asked about question: does the Bible say that smoking is a sin? The simple answer is, no! Not in those words. But then, the Bible, God's word, addresses many issues without using the exact words we use in today's society. An example would be masturbation, another much asked about question. It is my belief that our God and Heavenly Father, Creator and leader by example in Christ Jesus expects us to use common sense and His word to accomplish His goal for us, which is to grow toward Christlikeness (Romans 8:29). In order to do this, we must determine **to abstain from all appearance of evil** (I Thessalonians 5:22).

I definitely know about smoking and how hard it is to quit. I smoked cigarettes for forty years, a good portion of that time two to three packs a day. Now I am smoke-free almost four years - **it has become a done deal! Praise God!** As most of you know, I am a straight shooter, and call it as I see it - maybe not always "politically correct." Sometimes I will identify myself as an "inactive butt-sucker" (smoker)! Webster's New World Dictionary defines "butt" as "the remaining end or stub of a smoked cigarette or cigar," and "to suck" as "to take up or in, or as by sucking; to absorb or inhale." It may not sound so good, but "butt sucking" will kill you, add a horrible stench to your clothes, and make a chimney out of your nose, not to mention it is harmful to those around you.

The Bible does teach that when we receive Jesus Christ as Savior, we are to make Him Lord of our lives. This is brought about by obedience to what God's word says. "Now by this we know that we know Him, **if we keep His commandments**. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, **is a liar**, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His WORD, truly the LOVE of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also **to walk just as He walked**" (I John 2:3-6). When we receive Jesus as our personal Savior, we are saved and cleansed completely. But just as a baby must learn to walk, so we must learn to walk as Christ walked. That process is called "sanctification" or growing in holiness. Yes, as we grow, we take on Christ-likeness. Part of that growth is learning to take any wrong thoughts captive, thus rendering temptation of no effect.

So also it is with smoking. You are inhaling a poison into your body, that body which should be kept pure for God. You are a chosen vessel (Acts 9:15), the container for God's own Spirit who is in you from the moment of salvation (Ezekiel 36:27). Paul admonishes us **to present our bodies as living sacrifices**, and to keep them holy (Romans 12:1-2). "Every one of you should know how to keep his vessel (body) in sanctification and honor" (I Thessalonians 4:4). I know my thinking was wrong for a long time, for about thirty years. Yes, I was a Christian. Yes, I was saved, but I still smoked. I was delivered and had recovery from drug addiction and alcohol (I was a pig and a drunk!). I was even blessed by God to lead some to Christ. And all that time I was polluting my body with nicotine. I was even blessed by God to lead a recovery group, until one day I really looked hard at myself. The Bible tells us **to examine ourselves** to see if we are in the faith. What I saw I did not like very much: I was setting a bad example before others, an example not conducive to leading others to Christ. We must be clean for God to use us fully to do what He has called us to do. The word of God tells us we were saved for a purpose. My problem was that I used the excuse that I had stopped drinking and drugging, all I was doing now was smoking cigarettes. Smoking seemed so small compared to that, until I took a long and prayerful look. How in the world could I share how our God could deliver us from drinking and drugs, sexual addictions, and everything else, but not from cigarettes? So I was compelled to bow at the throne of God and seek His mercy and grace, and strength and power from the Holy Spirit, **to quit smoking and stop being a hypocrite**. I can testify it was really hard, and took some time to get past the triggers and temptations. "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear; but will **with the temptation also make a way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). God's word in Titus 2:11-12 sums it all up: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."
In conclusion: here comes the preaching from the straight shooter!

1.) Smoking is a sin, because **it defiles the body with its pollution**. Smoking is a defilement of the temple of God, which you are. "What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

2.) "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23, and "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Death entered the world through disobedience to the Creator, but **death comes early to smokers**. Each year some 440,000 deaths are attributed to cigarette smoking. You could be one, or someone you love!

3.) To be honest, if you smoke, you are an offense to others, **because you stink!**

4.) Also, you endanger others with your second-hand smoke. I have witnessed the pain and agony experienced by a smoker, a mother, as she sat by the bed of her daughter in the hospital. Her daughter had a life-threatening attack of asthma, brought on by her mother's second-hand smoke. That mother is my own daughter, the child is my granddaughter. **The mother is still smoking. Why?** Truth is, she is addicted to nicotine, as most smokers are!

5.) Nicotine is the addictive agent, whether by cigarette, cigar, pipe, plug or leaf chew, or snuff.

6.) Medical costs to treat the results of disease caused by the use of tobacco are beyond comparison! Not to mention all the other costs: cigarettes themselves, the cost to clean and repaint a house that a smoker lived in, and there is always the added danger of fire. Even the dangers of a smoker driving - check out the increased costs of insurance for a smoker. Lots of bucks!

7.) That brings us to another question - whose money is it anyway? The money spent on cigarettes, even though you may have earned it, is really God's money, because He gave you the ability to earn it. Question: are we spending the resources of God to do Satan's work? Absolutely! It must stop! It is sin of the greatest magnitude!

I am willing to partner with you or a loved one against this vulgar habit. If you or they will make a commitment, you or they will be victorious! "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). Remember Philippians 4:13, "**I CAN do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me.**" That is your promise. You are big enough to smoke. Are you big enough to stand against the curse of sin?

In His service,

Pastor Tom