

Article by John Isaac Edwards

Why We Don't Use Tobacco

John Isaac Edwards

Tobacco is a product prepared from the leaves of the tobacco plant. It is smoked in cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco and consumed as snuff, chewing tobacco, and dipping tobacco. “In 2013, almost 55.8 million Americans (21.3 percent of the population) were current cigarette smokers; 12.4 million smoked cigars; more than 8.8 million used smokeless tobacco; and over 2.3 million smoked tobacco in pipes” (National Institute on Drug Abuse). Why don't we?

1) **It Harms the Body.** “Cigarette smoking accounts for about one-third of all cancers, including 90 percent of lung cancer cases. Smokeless tobacco (such as chewing tobacco and snuff) also increases the risk of cancer, especially oral cancers” (National Institute on Drug Abuse). According to the World Health Organization, “Smokeless tobacco is a known cause of cancer. In addition, the nicotine in smokeless tobacco may increase the risk for sudden death from a condition where the heart does not beat properly.” We are taught to honor and properly use the physical body. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

2) **It Brings Premature Death.** According to the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention: “Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.” “Cigarette smoking results in more than 480,000 premature deaths in the United States each year—about 1 in every 5 U.S. deaths—and an additional 16 million people suffer with a serious illness caused by smoking. In fact, for every one person who dies from smoking, about 30 more suffer from at least one serious tobacco-related illness.” “The life expectancy for smokers is at least 10 years shorter than for nonsmokers.” Remember Hall of Famer, Tony Gwynn, who died last year from cancer in the salivary gland attributed to his habit of chewing tobacco? Life is short is at is (Ps. 89:47; 90:9-10; Jas. 4:14). Why shorten it?

3) **It Inflicts Harm to Others.** “The harmful effects of smoking extend far beyond the smoker. Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause serious diseases and death. Each year, an estimated 88 million nonsmoking Americans are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke and almost 41,000 nonsmokers die from diseases caused by secondhand smoke exposure” (National Institute on Drug Abuse). This goes against the Golden Rule (Mt. 7:12) and love of one's neighbor (Mt. 22:39). Paul said, “Look... every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4). Think of the poor, innocent children suffering with coughing, wheezing, asthma attacks, bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections and other serious health problems related to secondhand smoke!

4) **It Is Addicting.** Reports of the Surgeon General have concluded that cigarettes and tobacco products are addicting and that “Nicotine is the drug in tobacco that causes addiction.” The National Institute on Drug Abuse has revealed, “Electronic cigarettes produce a flavored nicotine vapor that has been shown to contain known carcinogens and toxic chemicals, as well as potentially toxic metal nanoparticles from the vaporizing mechanism.” According to data published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Tobacco Products, “Current e-cigarette use among middle and high school students tripled from 2013 to 2014.” Findings from the 2014 National Youth Tobacco Survey show that current e-cigarette use among high school students increased from 4.5 percent in 2013 to 13.4 percent in 2014, rising from approximately 660,000 to 2 million students. Among middle school students, current e-cigarette use more than tripled from 1.1 percent in 2013 to 3.9 percent in 2014—an increase from approximately 120,000 to 450,000 students.” “‘We want parents to know that nicotine is dangerous for kids at any age, whether it’s an e-cigarette, hookah, cigarette or cigar,’ said CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. ‘Adolescence is a critical time for brain development. Nicotine exposure at a young age may cause lasting harm to brain development, promote addiction, and lead to sustained tobacco use’” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Paul penned, “I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:18). Instead of addiction to nicotine, how about being “addicted to the ministry” (1 Cor. 16:15)?

5) **It Is Costly.** In addition to the costs to one’s health, the economic cost of tobacco is staggering — more than \$300 billion a year, including nearly \$170 billion in direct medical care and more than \$156 billion in lost productivity due to premature death and exposure to secondhand smoke” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). According to The American Cancer Society, the average price per pack of cigarettes in the U.S. is \$6.36. The health-related costs to you per pack of cigarettes — \$35! Now multiply that by the number of packs smoked. Think of all the valuable resources wasted and opportunities missed!

6) **It Is a Gateway Drug.** According to The National Institutes of Health, “A new study shows how tobacco products could act as gateway drugs, opening the door to use of illicit drugs. Nicotine, the researchers found, makes the brain more susceptible to cocaine addiction. Scientists have long recognized that cigarettes and alcohol raise the risk for later use of illicit drugs like marijuana and cocaine. In a recent national survey, over 90% of adult cocaine users between the ages of 18 and 34 had smoked cigarettes before they began using cocaine.”

7) **It Wasn’t Used by the Lord.** Can you see Jesus with tobacco couched in His lip, a pack of cigarettes in His pocket, or a hookah to His mouth? We are instructed, “... Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).

8) **It Undermines One’s Influence for Good.** Does tobacco use make you “a pattern of good works” (Titus 2:6-7) or help you to be “an example of the believers” (1 Tim. 4:12)? Would you want your children or grandchildren to do it? Would you say to another, as Gideon of old, “Look on me, and do likewise” (Judg. 7:17)?

Multitudes of tobacco users have sought to quit and earnestly warned others not to start. While tobacco and nicotine may be good as a pesticide, for the body we set it aside and say, “None inside!”

Response by Neal Abbott

Mr. Neal Abbott’s Post on Facebook

Is it a sin to smoke tobacco? I just read something by one of today’s many modern Pharisees who like to make up rules for others and then try to find something in the Bible for it, of course, he condemned it. I’m not saying it’s okay, but this is one of the many things it is up to the individual to study for themselves and live conscientiously. Believe it or not, there are plenty of gray areas and matters of opinion on religious matters.

The fella actually argued we can’t smoke because Jesus never did. That’s the level of dingbattery we’re dealing with. He said it’s addicting (note, not addictive, but addicting—a real genius). Uh, caffeine much? He won’t condemn coffee or sodas, but tobacco because it is addicting. Did you know air is addicting? I can’t live without it! The writer condemned smoking because it’s costly. And outside every church meeting place there are pickup trucks three stories tall and German luxury cars. We spend more church funds on larger bathrooms and smoothing the parking lot than we do benevolence, and we want to condemn a smoker for how they spend their money?

The biggest argument seemed to be about life and health. It shortens your life, according to the arguer. Guess what? Being a Christian can shorten your life, especially in the first century Roman Empire or parts of the Middle East and Africa today. Will someone say being a Christian is a sin because it could shorten your life? Of course, he gave no proof than shortening your life is a sin, but said smoking is a sin because it shortens your life. And then the big one, it harms the physical body, which is the temple of the Spirit, and if you harm the temple, you sin (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19-20). Listen closely, our physical human bodies are not temples. The body which is the temple is the body of believers, in other words, the church. But for those who say smoking is a sin because it destroys the temple, consider this. Is every person a temple or just Christians? Clearly only Christians could ever be called temples. So that means it is not a sin for non-Christians to smoke. Believe it if you can, but it’s non-sense.

There are plenty of black and white issues in the Bible issues in the Bible. There is no need to create laws on God’s behalf. I’m not saying smoking is right or wrong, but that it is something we need to study for ourselves. And don’t let these Pharisees bully you. They think they know what they’re talking about, but it’s all piffle. Remember, God loves you and so do I!

Response by John Isaac Edwards

I just read something posted on Facebook by Mr. Neal Abbott, in which he asks, "Is it a sin to smoke tobacco?" and then warns about something he read that was written in opposition to tobacco use "by one of today's many modern Pharisees". When Jesus spoke in Matthew 23, He was very specific in His address. He identified, "The scribes and the Pharisees..." (v. 2). Perhaps Mr. Abbott would be so kind as to let us know what he has read and who this modern Pharisee is. Also, will Mr. Abbott answer the question he poses, "Is it a sin to smoke tobacco?" Either it is or it isn't. Which is it? Will he tell us?

Mr. Abbott says these modern Pharisees "like to make up rules and then try to find something in the Bible for it." Is that what the Pharisees did? Jesus did not condemn the Pharisees for what they said, but for what they did and didn't do. "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Mt. 23:3). If these today are making up rules for others, they have usurped the authority of Christ for "There is one lawgiver..." (Jas. 4:12). Again, who are they?

Mr. Abbott says, "I'm not saying it's okay (smoking tobacco), but this is one of the many things it is up to the individual to study for themselves..." What is he saying then? If he's not saying it's okay, is he saying it's not okay (it's wrong)? He can't afford to say that for if he does, he puts himself among "today's many modern Pharisees." And, he can't afford to say that it's okay either; for by the same token, he would be "making up rules for others" and, by his definition of a Pharisee, he would make himself a modern Pharisee. So, he's put himself in a corner where he can't say, Yea or Nay. Would he write what he did in response to one who advocated it was right to smoke tobacco? Again, would Mr. Abbott disclose the source of that concerning which he speaks and leave it "up to the individual to study for themselves"?

Mr. Abbott says, "Believe it or not, there are plenty of gray areas and matters of opinion on religious matters." Perhaps he would provide us with a list of "gray areas". That should not be difficult, since "there are plenty". When he classifies smoking tobacco as opinion and a gray area, is he not making rules? What about allowing individuals to study for themselves?

Mr. Abbott says, "The fella actually argued we can't smoke because Jesus never did. That's the level of dingbattery we're dealing with." What's wrong with making an argument on what Jesus did or did not do? Didn't Jesus say, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (Jn. 13:15)? Didn't Peter write, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example,

that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21)? Is one a dingbat if he decides to do something Jesus did or refrains from something Jesus didn't do, or for which there is no reasonable reason to think Jesus would do it?

Mr. Abbott also took issue with what he read because, "He said it's addicting (note, not addictive, but addicting - a real genius)." Mr. Abbott insults the writer's intelligence because he used the word "addicting" instead of "addictive." Grammarists tells us addicting is synonymous with addictive. That's not the issue though - the issue is whether smoking tobacco is right or wrong or whether it is neither right nor wrong. He puts smoking tobacco with coffee, sodas, and air. Have you ever seen a surgeon general's warning label on a coffee can or soda bottle? Interestingly, there is such a thing as "the clean air act". Wonder how he feels about that?

Mr. Abbott said, "The writer condemned smoking because it's costly." He objects to this argument and puts smoking beside trucks, cars, bathrooms, and the parking lot. There is such a thing as stewardship, right? We are taught, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

Mr. Abbott said, "The biggest argument seemed to be about life and health. It shortens your life, according to the arguer....And then the big one, it harms the physical body, which is the temple of the Spirit, and if you harm the temple, you sin (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-20). Listen closely, our physical human bodies are not temples. The body which is the temple is the body of believers, in other words, the church. But for those who say smoking is a sin because it destroys the temple, consider this. Is every person a temple or just Christians? Clearly only Christians could ever be called temples. So that means it is not a sin for non-Christians to smoke. Believe it if you can, but it's non-sense." Mr. Abbott says, "Listen closely, our physical human bodies are not temples." If the physical body is not a temple, Jesus did not know it. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up....But he spake of the temple of his body" (Jn. 2:19, 21). And, the apostle Paul didn't know it either. He said, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19). That's not the body of believers, the church, but one's physical body. In the context, Paul talks about a man sinning against his own body. "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18). Who commits the sin of fornication: a man or the church? Mr. Abbott reasons, if only Christians could be called temples then it's not a sin for non-Christians to smoke. Mr. Abbott, "Is it a sin for non-Christians to fornicate?"

Mr. Abbott says, "Don't let these Pharisees bully you. They think they know what they're talking about, but it's all piffle. Remember, God loves you and so do I!" Mr. Abbot

hasn't told us whether smoking is sinful or not, but when one studies for himself and offers reasons as to why not to engage in the practice, he is accused of bullying and implicated as unloving. Mr Abbott has an interesting view of love. Mr. Abbott encourages his readers to study for themselves and when one studies for himself and writes his conclusions, the writer is said to be a modern Pharisee (read Matthew 23 and note the strong language used by the Lord in condemnation of the Pharisees), accused of making up rules for others, called a dingbat, his intelligence is insulted, his conclusions are said to be non-sense, he's a bully, and what he says is all piffle! Now, how loving is that?

Interestingly, the only Scripture in Mr. Abbott's writing is when he referred to Scripture used by the "modern Pharisee". Mr. Abbott's statements have no Scripture with them. It was Paul's manner to reason out of the Scriptures (Acts 17:2). We would like to see Mr. Abbott do the same.

Mr. Abbott's post is supplied below so that you might study for yourself. Perhaps, he will supply the source of that concerning which he writes, so that we might study for ourselves.

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