



WHAT CAN YOU NOT DO?

When Gail and I were in high school, our high school group would sometimes have a panel discussion on the question of whether a Christian could smoke or not. There are other questions related to the “dirty dozen,” things Christians can not do. But can they? Is it permissible for a Christian to go to the movies? To a dance? Etc. The Bible says nothing about cigarettes or movies. Where do we go for an answer?

The Scripture which was usually cited with respect to smoking was, *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?*

I Corinthians 6:19

The argument was that the smoke pollutes the temple and therefore is wrong. Actually, that’s stretching the metaphor a bit. The Bible, however does have answers to these questions as well as all the other questions in life. You have only to look for them.

Paul writes, *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.*

I Corinthians 6:12

and *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.*

I Corinthians 10:23

Four times he says, *all things are lawful for me.* This means everything. Why? Because the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from every sin we have committed, are committing, or will commit. The answer to the question, “Can a Christian smoke?” is, “Yes, all things are lawful.”

The problem we have here is that we are asking the wrong question. The question we are to ask is “**should** I, as a Christian, do...(thus and so)...?” In telling us that everything is lawful, Paul also gives us insight as to how we are to answer this last question. We must ask ourselves:

- Is it helpful?

- Will it overpower us?
- Will it edify us?

“Helpful” is from the Greek word *sumphero* which means, literally, “to bring together.” We might use it in the phrase, “Get your act together!” The word was used by Christ when he said¹, *If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*

Matthew 5:29-30

So, the question is, “will doing this thing keep me from “getting my act together” as a Christian. Will it hurt my witness before others? Will it keep me from becoming a better Christian?

Overpower is from *exousiazo* and means just what it says. Christ said, *"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'* *But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.*

Luke 22:25-26

As a Christian, no one and no thing is to have power over us, only God. If a thing is addicting, if it will assume power over our actions, it is not a thing we should do. “Can I do (thus and so) without it becoming a habit?”

Finally, we have edify. The word means to “build up,” to “cause to grow.” Will doing this thing cause me to become a better Christian? Will I learn from this experience something that will bring me closer to the Lord?

The next time you have a question on whether or not you should do something, ask yourself whether or not it will do the above three things. Then you will have an answer. Wayne

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¹Technically, Christ spoke in Aramaic and his words translated into Greek.

