

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Addiction

(Jerry Fite)

In America, sixteen million people live with smoking-related diseases. Twenty million Americans over the age of twelve have an addiction to substances other than tobacco. On the average, over one hundred and thirty people die daily of opioid overdose. Why would anyone want to smoke when cancer and severe breathing problems are common consequences? What do drugs do to the brain that would cause one to continue to ingest pills, even to a deadly excess?

Prescribed opioid drugs connect with opiate receptors in the brain and spine to block the feeling of pain. This is helpful. The various opioids also produce euphoria in the part of the brain that is the pathway for the feeling of pleasure. However, reoccurring pain treated by opioids poses a problem over time. Warnings were sounded as early as 2003 that chronic use created a tolerance factor that would demand higher or more frequent doses of opioids in order to have the same beneficial effect. Even more problematic, the drugs seem to intensify the feeling of pain, making the pain worse. Over the last fifteen years opioid addiction and overdose deaths have increased dramatically in our country. It is primarily an American problem,

because 80 to 85 percent of the world’s supply of opioids is consumed in America, while comprising only 5 percent of the world’s population.

Nicotine also has its receptors in the part of the brain that produces the feeling of pleasure. It binds to nicotine receptors messaging for dopamine to be released. Feeding the nicotine craving that produces pleasure and satisfaction demands more and more cigarettes. A reoccurring habit has been created. Addiction is the offspring.

Over the last few years, cigarette smoking among adults has been on the decline. From 2005 to 2016, adult smokers decreased over 5 percent. But a different type of smoker in a different demographic appears to be increasing by number. Young teenagers are now vaping, not smoking combustible cigarettes.

High Schoolers and middle school students are experimenting with “Juul” at a high percentage. In a survey of 13,000 of 15-34 year-old’s, 56 per cent said they had used the “Juul” device in the last 30 days. “Juul” is pronounced “jewel” by design to connect value to the product. The slender device is battery charged

to create vapor and the flavorful “pods,” such as “mint” or “mango,” fit into the end of the device, creating the mouth piece. One takes in the flavor and exhales the vapor.

“Juul” is advertised as an alternative for adults who smoke. It is an alternative for adults who have smoked cigarettes and experienced the negatives of bad breath and smelly clothes. As one forty-year old woman remarked, it *“let’s me be me without the stereotype of being a smoker.”* She can still feed her addiction to nicotine, without being labeled negatively as a cigarette smoker. Yes, nicotine is still being delivered to the brain, but now more than two times as fast as cigarettes. Each dispensable pod contains more nicotine than a pack of cigarettes. How long until an unsuspecting youthful generation becomes addicted to nicotine?

Christians, young and old, must make righteous judgments, based upon revealed truth, instead of appearance (*John 7:14*). As God’s people, we must never let anything, have power over our minds and lives (*I Corinthians 6:12*). Things may look harmless and make us feel good. But we cannot abandon self-control to any addiction!