

Dear Pastor,

At My Faith Votes we believe your role as pastor is the most crucial in society. You have the biblical responsibility to preach the word, teach God's truth, lead people in worship, tend your flock, and mobilize your church for Christian witness and service (Ephesians 4:11-16).

It's imperative that we, as Christians, understand what's really going on and why we need to be informed before the disastrous consequences of legalized drugs being heaped upon us. The result of allowing "a little sin" will only enable this cancer to metastasize and grow.

We are asking Pastors to speak out on a biblical view, so congregations are informed. With the federal government seeking to reclassify marijuana as a lower-risk drug and with states asking voters to legalize it, this is the time to ensure your congregation is biblically and factually informed.

The facts are clear.

There are real risks associated with legalizing recreational marijuana, especially for youth, young adults, and pregnant women. The mind-altering chemicals in commercial cannabis (marijuana) products today are dramatically higher in potency than in years past, showing up in states with legalized recreational use.

Here are some key talking points for your congregation:

- **Societal Shifts:** Marijuana is a fast-growing industry in states with legalized recreational use. Retail stores, wineries, breweries, coffee shops, dispensaries, grown-at-home shops, and online ordering are transforming quiet bedroom communities into mass production and distribution centers. The National Police Association spokesperson, Betsy Branter Smith says that an "increase in crime goes hand in hand with a decrease in concerns about things like substance abuse. The problem is, when you continue to desensitize the population against substance abuse, you start to desensitize them against a sense of right and wrong."
- **Youth and Young Adults:** Marijuana use among young people in "legal" states is alarmingly high and rising. Nearly 1 in 5 Americans over 12 years old used cannabis in 2021 according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. Use among those ages 12 and older nearly tripled after it was legalized for adults, with marijuana companies specifically targeting young people through many means including social media.
- **Mental Health:** There are over 20,000 peer-reviewed research articles linking marijuana use to severe mental health outcomes and consequences for physical health. Rather than ease symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders, marijuana use has been shown to raise the risk of the onset of a psychotic or mental health disorder. Those with preexisting mental conditions have also displayed a worsened condition after use.
- **Brain Health:** The National Institute of Health states that regular marijuana use can reduce IQ by eight points and may be irreversible. Marijuana exposure during developmental stages can cause long-term adverse changes in the executive functions of the brain.
- **Community Health:** People ages 18-25 have the highest rate of use and research shows that people who use marijuana are more likely to have relationship problems, worse educational outcomes, lower career achievement, and reduced satisfaction in life.

This is the time when we should be dissuading drug use and NOT making a deadly product easier to acquire or normalizing it's use as "recreation."

Pastors, churches and parishes must take the lead in fighting the legalization of marijuana. Many of our church's children are at risk. Even more so are those kids who lack a solid foundation and need us as shepherds to protect them from those who would exploit them for profit.

Jesus urged us all to pray daily that we are not led into temptation. We must encourage fellow Christians not to open this door. As a pastor, please do all that you can to inform your congregation and use your influence in the community.

Standing for Christ with you,

Jason Yates, CEO, My Faith Votes