



What Does God Say?

“For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are.” (Hebrews 4:12, NLT)

Have you ever felt that God is just out to spoil your fun? When a parent says to their small son or daughter, “Don’t run in the street; look both ways before you cross the street,” there is an implied promise of protection and safety if he/she obeys. In the same way, when your heavenly Father gives a command to, “Do this” or “Don’t do that,” he is expressing his love for you and desire to protect you. His plans are always good. *“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”* (Jeremiah 29:11) What are the plans of Satan, your enemy? *“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy.”* (John 10:10a, NLT) You have a choice. Whom will you obey?

The occult

God emphatically says that some thoughts, words and activities are sin and will bring disaster into your life if you do them. Today there is increased fascination with the occult, the practice used to seek supernatural knowledge and power from Satan or demons. Occult images frequently appear in cartoons, video games, toys, movies and even clothing. **However, what does God say about the occult?** God told Moses: *“And do not let your people practice fortune-telling or sorcery, or allow them to interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call for the spirit of the dead.”* (Deuteronomy 18:20, NIV) Satan is behind all forms of the occult. Don’t give Satan a place in your life by getting involved in the occult.

Do you read your horoscope in the newspaper? (A horoscope is a claim to foretell events of a person’s life by the positions of planets and signs of the zodiac.) Maybe you do it out of curiosity or you think it’s fun, but **what does God say about reading horoscopes?** To trust the stars, etc. for the future instead of the God who made the stars, is idol worship. He has strictly forbidden the worship of the “sun, moon, or any of the forces of heaven.” (Deuteronomy 17:3) In the Old Testament, people who participated in such things were to be stoned! To wear astrological jewelry and signs of the zodiac is to give a place in your life to the enemy.

What should you do if you are involved in such things? When the believers of Ephesus understood that the magic they practiced was sin, *“a number of them who had been*

practicing magic brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars.” (Acts 19:19, NLT) Note that they did not give them away but destroyed them. What a powerful effect this made on the nonbelievers! The Gospel spread rapidly! Search your heart. Is there something you need to burn or throw away – jewelry, books, videos, movies, CD’s or magazines? Get rid of anything that lures you into such practices! Your changed behavior may change the life of a non-believing friend.

Pornography

One of the sneakiest temptations the enemy uses, which has a gradual and cumulative effect on your mind and body, is pornography. **What does God say about pornography?** Although God does not use the word pornography, he has lots to say about it. Sexual sin begins in the mind. The Bible calls it “lust of the eyes!” Pornography has nothing to do with real love and everything to do with lust (intense sexual desire). It is looking at pictures that cause sexual excitement. You can do this by looking at magazines, movies, television, or surfing on the internet. You may think you are doing it in secret, but God, who lives in you, sees and knows the damage it is doing. Pornography pollutes your thinking and warps your mind toward God’s wonderful gift of sex. Once pictures are in your “computer,” they can flash in your mind at odd times – even in your dreams! It soon becomes an addiction. God says, *“Run from anything that stimulates your youthful lust. Follow anything that makes you want to do right.”* (2 Timothy 2:22a, NLT) If Satan has lured you into this sin, God wants to set you free. Confess your sin; receive God’s forgiveness and destroy all those things that can lead you into temptations. Fill your mind with Bible verses that help you resist the enemy. Ask for help from your parents, youth pastor or a mature Christian friend.

Laziness

What does God say about laziness? Is it a sin? To get that truth across to his disciples, Jesus told a story about a master who prepared to leave on a trip. He called his servants and gave them money to invest while he was away. He gave three bags of gold to one, two to another and one to the last. The first one went right to work, invested his money and doubled it; the second went to work and doubled his; and the last dug a hole in the ground and hid the money. How lazy can you get!

When the master returned, he praised the first two, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant. I will give you more responsibilities.” When the third man gave excuses, the master replied, “You wicked and lazy servant!” Then he instructed his servants to take the money from the man. He said, *“To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away.”* (Matthew 25:14-30, NLT) Did you notice the promise given to those who worked and invested their money? They will have abundance! That should inspire you to work!

When some of the Thessalonians refused to work, Paul made a rule: “*Whoever does not work should not eat!*” In the name of Jesus, he commanded them “*to go to work and earn a living!*” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-14, NLT) Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “*Work with enthusiasm, as though Jesus were your boss!*” (Ephesians 6:7, NLT) Think about that the next time you rebel at doing your schoolwork or chores at home! Whether making your bed, cleaning the garage, doing homework or another job, do your best for Jesus!

Alcoholic drinks

Drinking alcoholic beverages is one of the greatest temptations among teenagers. The world would have you believe that it is cool to drink and use drugs. However, as a teenager, you are most vulnerable to develop addictions because regions of your brain that govern impulse and motivation are not yet fully formed. In fact, the brain does not fully develop until about age 25! Repeated drinking and taking drugs alter brain development, make you less able to learn and affect you even as an adult. Alcohol is a depressant, addictive and slows down your body, making it difficult to think clearly. It causes you to lose self-control which can lead to immoral behavior, car accidents and death. For some, alcohol causes aggression and violent behavior. Perhaps all these truths are why God says, “*Don’t let the sparkle and the smooth taste of strong wine deceive you. For in the end it bites like a poisonous serpent; it stings like an adder!*” (Proverbs 23:31-32, LB)

What does God say about taking a drink? He does not say you cannot take a drink, but he emphatically says that getting drunk is a sin. Paul cautions, “*Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.*” (Ephesians 5:18, NLT) Led by the Holy Spirit, Paul lists “drunkenness and wild parties” in a long list of the desires of your sinful nature and warns that no one living that sort of life will inherit the Kingdom of God! (Read Galatians 5:19-21)

Even though the Bible does not say you cannot take a drink, it gives many reasons for not drinking. You are not to drink if it offends the conscience of another, causes someone to stumble (causes him/her to drink) or hurts your Christian testimony. (Read Romans 14:12-16) Out of love, you are not to think of yourself but others.

God cares about your body, as it is actually a part of Christ. Now if you really believe that Jesus Christ (who has all knowledge, wisdom and power) lives in you, do you need an “alcoholic buzz” to get through life? Would you need to read your horoscope to see the future or participate in the occult? Would you even think of looking at pornography? Stop and really think about this. Remember, God loves you enough to give you a choice!

Attitude Check:

- How have things you have watched on the TV or looked at on the internet affected your attitude toward yourself, God and others?

Explore:

- Read, “We Must Live Out Our Faith” (James 2:14-17), and “Rejoice, Because Victory Is Yours in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 10:13). If God has spoken to you about the above issues, record the choices you have made in your journal.

Talking with God:

- Father, as I confess sins that you have revealed, fill me with your power and set me free from all the things that have entrapped me.