



Sermon Series: 5 Truths for Today
Sermon Title: Just Because You Can...
Date: 9/28/2025

Big Idea: Is this choice leading me closer to Jesus, or pulling me further away?

We live in a world full of choices, especially when it comes to substances like alcohol, marijuana, or prescription drugs. Many view these options as harmless - or even beneficial - but context matters. Some substances, when misused, can harm our health, relationships, and spiritual life. The deeper, biblical question isn't "Is this substance good or bad?" but "How does this affect my walk with Christ?"

The Bible doesn't provide a modern list of approved or forbidden substances and doesn't specifically address things like marijuana or modern medications. Yet it does mention substances such as alcohol nearly 250 times, showing that God expects us to navigate it wisely. Scripture provides timeless principles to guide our decisions - principles designed to protect our freedom and joy while keeping our hearts aligned with God.

Test 1: The Honor Test

1 Corinthians 10:31 challenges us: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The heart of this test is the "why" behind our choices. Are our actions honoring God, or are they replacing Him with a substitute? Paul warns in **Galatians 5:19–21** about the "works of the flesh," including pharmakia - substances used to alter the mind. In the ancient world, these were tied to pagan worship and idolatry. Today, they may appear in the form of recreational drugs or psychedelics, offering a counterfeit spiritual experience.

Medicine, on the other hand, honors God when used responsibly to care for the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 6:19–20**). The Honor Test asks: Does this choice draw my heart closer to God, or does it replace Him with a substance?

Test 2: The Self-Control Test

While alcohol is not directly forbidden for Christians, the Bible repeatedly warns against losing control. **Ephesians 5:18** instructs, “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” **Proverbs 20:1** cautions that wine can mislead. Addiction rarely starts as obvious dependence, it begins small. When a substance moves from optional to necessary, it becomes a master, undermining our freedom in Christ (**1 Corinthians 6:12**). The Self-Control Test asks: Am I mastering it, or is it mastering me?

Test 3: The Wisdom Test

Paul writes, “All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful” (**1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23**). Just because something is legal or technically permissible doesn’t mean it’s beneficial. Wisdom considers context: family history, personal vulnerability, current life circumstances, and future goals. A choice that dulls your mind, drains resources, or harms your health, even if not sinful, is unwise. The Wisdom Test asks: Is this consistent with the person God is shaping me to become?

Test 4: The Influence Test

Faith is not private; our choices ripple outward. Paul warns in **1 Corinthians 8:9** not to become a stumbling block. Even a single drink or puff, seen by someone vulnerable, can have unintended consequences. Choosing restraint out of consideration for others is an act of love for them, helping to protect their faith. The Influence Test asks: Who might be watching, and how does this impact them?

These four tests, Honor, Self-Control, Wisdom, and Influence, are not legalistic chains. They are guardrails, tools to help us walk wisely and freely in a complex world. Jesus died to set us free from sin and the need for substitutes. Only He satisfies fully. Every choice should be weighed against one question: Is this choice leading me closer to Jesus, or pulling me further away?

Discussion Questions:

- **The Honor Test:** Are there any substances or habits that subtly replace God in your life? How can you recognize when something is becoming a “substitute savior”?
- **The Self-Control Test:** Think about a choice you make regularly—does it control you, or do you have control over it? How can you strengthen your self-control in areas of temptation?
- **The Wisdom Test:** Considering your personal history and current life circumstances, what choices might be lawful but unwise for you? How does context influence your decisions?
- **The Influence Test:** Who in your life might be watching your actions, and how could your choices impact their faith or spiritual growth? How can you demonstrate love by sometimes saying “no” to freedoms?
- **Big Picture Reflection:** How can the question, *“Is this choice leading me closer to Jesus, or pulling me further away?”* serve as a daily guide for making decisions about substances and other temptations?