

## IT'S JUST A CIGARETTE, OH YEAH?

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Max was an ex prize fighter who had been very much of a rough and tumble individual, but the sight that greeted me in the hospital reminded me of a sail torn and tattered by a great storm, flapping in the breeze. The body bore only a faint resemblance to what it once had been. The physical frame of a prize fighter was there all right, but on the frame of large bones lay sagging muscles and yellowed, sickly looking flesh that had lost its tone.

Frankly, I have seen more than a few dying men, but the sight of this man touched my heart. Part of it was the pitiful condition of a body that had once been so physically strong. When he talked, his gray beard stubble revealed scars that had accumulated in the ring. Max still wasn't old by a long shot, but his body retched when he coughed. He knew that he was dying. He told me that it was lung cancer and that the doctors had given him only a few days to live.

"If you don't mind my question," I asked, "got any idea what caused it?"

"Sure," he said, "smoking. I've been a chain smoker."

Seventy-five years ago, lung cancer was called "the rarest of diseases." Then in the 1920's it gradually started to increase. But in the '40s and '50s, it spiraled upwards. Dr. S. I. McMillen, a medical doctor, says, "In England, between 1924 and 1951 the death rates shot up tenfold, while in Holland they soared twentyfold. In the U. S. during the past twenty years, the death toll from lung cancer increased 500%. At the present time more men die from it than from any other cancer. In fact, one out of every seven people who die of cancer has undergone the horrors of lung cancer.

"That," says Dr. McMillen, "is a far cry from 1912 when it was the rarest of diseases'." The habit of smoking is an interesting phenomenon. Have you thought much about it? Why do people continue to smoke when that habit may take ten to twenty years off their life? For every cigarette someone smokes, you can deduct 14 minutes from his or her life span. With 20 cigarettes in a pack, every time a person

starts a new pack, he or she has just taken away four-and-a-half hours from his life. If someone smoke a pack a day, every year he has just given away 68 days of life for that habit.

For every ten years you smoke, you give up two years, and those are the years when you would be watching your grandchildren graduate from college and have babies of their own. But you won't be there to see it.

There must, however, be a motive for quitting- a higher motive than saving the money that smoking costs, or even the hope of living for another few years. Your human body is the highest of God's creations. When you recognize that God has certain claims on your body, what you do to your body will become a tremendous factor in helping you to stop smoking. Says McMillan, "Although tobacco was not used when the Bible was written and is therefore not mentioned specifically, the impact of many verses has given sufficient warning to keep millions of Christians from using tobacco." To the Corinthian believers, the Apostle Paul wrote, "What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you? You are not your own you are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 3:16). This principle that you belong to the Lord can be the motivation you need to beat the habit and save your life.

A postscript. Max stopped smoking all right, but concurrent with it, he also stopped breathing—a pretty tough cure, for sure.

Resource reading: 1 Corinthians 6

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