To faculty and friends at Reformed Theological Seminary – Washington, DC, who taught me to ask and answer the question: “What does the Bible say?”

– Tom Breeden

To the many people I love on the West Side of Greenville, South Carolina.

– Mark L. Ward, Jr.
“Breeden and Ward offer a biblical, witty, and persuasive reply to a pressing question. *Can I Smoke Pot?* is a must read for young people and their pastors. I’ve already started reading selections to my own teens.”

**Chad Van Dixhoorn**, Chancellor’s Professor of Historical Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary – Washington, DC

“The authors answer the question, ‘Can I smoke pot?’ with a wide view of the issues. Their answers are sound and persuasive, because they make a case from the whole Bible, beginning with the good creation. Without shallow appeals to unpersuasive texts, they consider a Christian worldview. Especially helpful is thinking about pot-smoking in relation to one’s responsibility to the community. This is a fine, biblical presentation.”

**Howard Griffith, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Academic Dean, Reformed Theological Seminary – Washington, DC

“*Can I Smoke Pot?* is a good summary of the biblical teaching relevant to the use of marijuana. Authors Ward and Breeden have written it in language easily understood by young people. It makes a strong case against the recreational use of pot while recognizing the possible medical benefits of it.”

**Dr. John Frame**, Professor of Systematic Theology & Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary
# Table of Contents

*Marijuana and the Bible* ................. 5  
An Opening Word

One  *Marijuana and Creation* ................. 9  

Two  *Marijuana and Government* ............... 19  

Three  *Marijuana and Medicine* ............... 37  

Four  *Marijuana and Alcohol* ................. 55  

*Marijuana and You* ....................... 79  
A Closing Word

About the Authors ......................... 84  

*Appendix* ............................. 85  
How to Use the Bible to Answer Your Questions  
*by Peter Krol*

Endnotes .............................. 104  
More books from Cruciform Press .... 107
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If you can’t use the Bible to answer your questions, you don’t really understand it.

The Bible contains all the divine words we need to know God, to please him, and to live righteous lives. Even if it doesn’t always answer our specific questions, it does speak in some way to every aspect of life. Often it does this through general commands. For example, there are no situations in which it’s okay to take part in “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11), no ways in which you can be “conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2), and no places where you can make “provision for the flesh” (Romans 13:14). No corner of human life is exempt from the norms in Scripture; we are to do “all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

So can a Christian smoke pot for God’s glory? Just search the Bible for the word marijuana. You’ll strike out. Search for any verse containing
Can I Smoke Pot?

weed, dank, green, 420, herb, ganja, Mary Jane—nothing. (Look for pot and you will, admittedly, get a bunch of search results, but not very helpful ones in this case.)

But questions about pot won’t go away, so how do we get answers from a Christian perspective?

Christians get answers on fundamentally moral questions from the Bible. And if you can’t use the Bible to answer a moral question with reasonable clarity, you’re misunderstanding it somewhere. You need some help using it.

Good and Necessary Consequence

The students and teachers of the Bible who put together the classic and influential Westminster Confession of Faith were not faced with a societal debate over medical and recreational marijuana use, but they did encounter equally pressing moral issues to which the Bible did not speak directly.

Four-hundred years ago, they saw that sometimes we have to answer our moral questions “by good and necessary consequence” from what the Bible says more generally.¹ We have to interpret Scripture. A few quick examples:

- The Bible never explicitly says that porn videos are wrong, but this conclusion is a good and
necessary consequence of Jesus’ statement that “everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

• The Bible never specifically says that downloading pirated music and movies is wrong (although pirate should be a clue), but this conclusion is a good and necessary consequence of the commandment not to steal (Exodus 20:15).

• The Bible never says what the alternative minimum tax rate should be, or which public lands should permit logging, or how many shoes a person should own—and even when answers to these questions are appropriately different in different situations, the Bible sets the boundaries inside which these moral decisions must be made.

In short, the Bible sets out for us the system of values without which we cannot make God-pleasing choices in the first place.

So if you’re looking for explicit passages about marijuana in the Bible, you’ll be disappointed. They aren’t there. And yet the Bible isn’t silent. The goal of this book is to provide the basic theological framework, built directly on biblical statements, that you will need to answer your questions about marijuana to the glory of God. (And if you’d like
Can I Smoke Pot?

some more guidance on how to get answers from Scripture in general, check out the Appendix.)
In the beginning, God created pot.

Every Christian discussion of marijuana, or of anything in creation, has to begin there, where the Bible does. In the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, Creator is the way God chooses to introduce himself to the world. Before we find out that God exists in Trinity or that he is love—and long before we find out that just because God created something doesn’t necessarily mean you should put it in your mouth—we learn that God is Creator.

Christians generally consider the author of Genesis to be Moses. In his day, the gods with the highest public-approval ratings made the world by accident in a fight, or out of a lazy desire for slave labor. But in the account that Moses presents, God creates and fills the world methodically, carefully. The creation is, consequently, like its creator: it is
“good” (Genesis 1:4; 1:10; 1:12; 1:18; 1:21; 1:25), even “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

The speech of God in Genesis culminates with his speaking into existence the highest and best of his creations, the only creation to bear his image and likeness: man and woman. “Let us make man in our image,” God said. And it was so.

That is how man, marijuana, and everything else came to be. And all of it was good.

**Fall: Sin Infects Creation**

As everyone who’s made it at least a few days into a Bible-reading plan knows, however, the perfect goodness of creation didn’t last. Sin slinks into the story of the Bible, and into the cosmos, by page 3. Instead of embracing the goodness of creation, Adam and Eve choose to rebel against God. And they jump into this rebellion with all four feet then in existence. Adam and Eve, given kingly and queenly rule over God’s creation, led the world into futility and ruin. At that first sin, all of creation enters what Christians call the fall.

The good gift of children will now be painful, and the good gift of marriage will be disordered (Genesis 3:16). The natural world will bring pain to humanity (3:17-18). The good gifts of working, keeping, having dominion, and subduing will become frustrating and difficult (3:19).
But the inherent goodness of creation will not go away: wombs will still bear children, marriages will still bring genuine happiness, and plants will still grow. The fall marred God’s good creation but did not destroy it. Creation is still good, but because of the curse it is now marked with a futility and corruption that were not part of its original state.

And fallen creation is still beautiful. Even after sin brings a curse upon God’s world, the Bible continues to treat the splendor of creation as a reason for God to be worshipped. Creation puts man in his place, both humbling him and exalting him:

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him? (Psalm 8:3-4)

Creation, even after the fall, declares God’s glory to all people:

The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.  
(Psalm 19:1)
Mankind itself, standing tallest and therefore falling furthest, is still a source of wonder:

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:13-14)


The New Testament ushers in something entirely wonderful—a new act of creation. This is a redemption promised even in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) and echoed repeatedly throughout the Old Testament (Isaiah 65:17-25; Jeremiah 31:31-40; Ezekiel 36:33-36). It breaks into this fallen world through the person and work of Jesus, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity.

When the Bible speaks of this new creation, however, we must not think of God tossing the old creation in the cosmic trash bin, dusting off his hands, and starting over. No, the new creation taking place after the fall, as one theologian has illustrated it, is like a child who contracts a life-threatening disease. He still grows, he is still irreplaceable—his parents would be rightly offended at a doctor’s suggestion that they just get a new kid. But he is not all he was meant to be.
New creation, in this illustration, is like a cure that comes along for the boy’s disease at some point after the diagnosis. The cure enables him to get back onto the fully healthy path of growth he was meant to be on. Sometime later, thanks to the cure there is little trace of the disease left in him.

The new creation is therefore the fulfillment of creation’s original intent. However, as theologian John Frame says, it’s not as if the new creation was a:

“Plan B” to replace an original creation that God had somehow failed to keep on course. Redemption was God’s plan before the creation of the world (1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5-11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2). The new creation represents the telos, the goal, of the old.4

After all, we Christians are ourselves “new creations” — everyone in Christ is (2 Corinthians 5:17) — yet at no point does God completely start over with us. We remain ourselves even after we become new creations in Christ.

Romans 8 is the key New Testament passage explaining how creation, Fall, and redemption all come together in a truly biblical theology.5 It suggests that the scope of Christ’s redemptive work is as great as the scope of the fall.
The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19-23)

Creation is not accomplishing everything it was designed to do; it has been “subjected to futility.” But at the “revealing of the sons of God”—when the children of God are revealed in glory at the return of Jesus Christ—so too will creation be glorified. When Christians receive their fully resurrected, glorious bodies on the last day, creation itself will be set free from futility and attain that same glory. The new creation is not a replacement. It is a restoration.

Every time someone becomes a believer in Christ, or even when a Christian simply obeys his or her Lord, an act of partial but meaningful restoration has occurred. At that moment of obedience, the rule of Christ is breaking into the world, hinting at
(and sometimes shouting) what re-creation will one day look like. We are taught to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” And it will. And it has.

Only when Christ returns will God’s restorative work be complete. Then we will enjoy what John saw at the Bible’s close: “a new heaven and a new earth.” We’ll see God take his dwelling place with man. “They will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” All tears, mourning, pain—all the “former things” brought by Adam and Eve’s sin will have passed away (Revelation 21:1–4).

The Bible is the story of what God is doing to glorify himself by redeeming his fallen creation. One day, he will remove the curse completely and restore the world to the way he created it to be.

**Creation and Marijuana**

A good creation means that created things are good. Creation is not neutral; it’s good. It’s not merely potentially good; it’s good. The actual, tangible stuff of creation is good. Pot is good. The coca plant is good. Tobacco is good. Hops are good.

And yet, influenced heavily by Greek philosophy, many early Christians believed precisely that the material world is bad and only the spiritual world is good. Still today there are Christians who are nervous or suspicious about the goodness of created things—such as emotions, or authority, or the body.
A Christian college student once pinched the skin on his arm and said to his friend, “Flesh—this stuff is bad, right?” A young seminarian approached his theology professor for counsel about his poor health, and was upset when he was told to get sufficient sleep and stop eating so much junk food. “Someday I’ll be rid of this body, so why should I care so much about it now?” the student said. He was expecting more “spiritual” counsel.

If the body is bad, then why did God call it good? Adam had flesh, didn’t he? And if it’s temporary, why does Jesus still have a physical body at this moment? (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

*Everything* God made is good for its intended purpose(s). An ascetic rejection of God’s good creation—a refusal to enjoy, or let others enjoy, the good things God has made—is what Paul calls a “doctrine of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1–4 KJV). Make no mistake: Christianity is about our whole being, body and spirit. Because God created everything, it is all his concern.

**Marijuana is Good**
If we don’t start our discussion of marijuana by rightly pointing out that it’s good, we may begin to blame God for any bad uses to which it’s put. If Cannabis *sativa* is inherently evil, and God created it, what else could we conclude?²⁶
What’s so good about marijuana, then? What possible good reason could God have for creating something that you can smoke or ingest to get high?

There are answers to this question, and we’ll get into them later. But right now we have to make an important distinction before we talk about medical and recreational uses of pot: there is a major difference between saying there must be good purposes for marijuana and saying that all purposes of marijuana must be good.

Fire is used for cooking and for warmth. But fire has also been used to destroy via arson, and to murder via Molech. Fire is good, but not every use humans make of it is good. Fire is good, but (unless you work for a circus) that doesn’t mean you should put it in your mouth.

God created uranium, too; it isn’t a doctrine of devils to forbid people to sprinkle it on their ice cream.

Respectable, buttoned-down, middle-class, church-attending Western Christians need to say full-throatedly that marijuana is good—or they’ll be betraying Genesis 1 and 2. For reasons of deep biblical-theological principle, we must enter this discussion about marijuana looking not just for the wicked ways marijuana can be used, but the good ones. We were given dominion “over all the earth” by our creator, and told to subdue it—that
is, pushing it towards its full potential and maximizing its usefulness for mankind. It would be wrong to exclude even one plant from the morally good category we call creation.

That said, now we must be ready to address the next logical question: OK, marijuana is good, but good for what?

**Takeaways for Chapter 1**

1. God created the world good, including the stuff of creation. Marijuana is good.
2. The curse of sin affects all of creation. Creation retains its goodness, but it falls short of the full goodness for which it was designed.
3. Just because a created thing is good does not mean that all uses of that created thing are good, too.
“Peter Krol has done us a great service by writing the book Knowable Word. It is valuable for those who have never done in-depth Bible study and a good review for those who have. I look forward to using this book to improve my own Bible study.”

_Jerry Bridges, author, The Pursuit of Holiness, and many more_

“It is hard to over-estimate the value of this tidy volume. It is clear and uncomplicated. No one will be off-put by this book. It will engage the novice and the serious student of Scripture. It works as a solid read for individuals or as an exciting study for a small group.”

_Tedd Tripp, pastor and author (from the Foreword)_

“At the heart of Knowable Word is a glorious and crucial conviction: that understanding the Bible is not the preserve of a few, but the privilege and joy of all God’s people. Peter Krol’s book demystifies the process of reading God’s Word and in so doing enfranchises the people of God. I warmly encourage you to read it.”

_Dr. Tim Chester, The Porterbrook Network_

“Here is an excellent practical guide to interpreting the Bible. Krol has thought through, tested, and illustrated in a clear, accessible way basic steps in interpreting the Bible, and made everything available in a way that will encourage ordinary people to deepen their own study.”

_Vern Poythress, Westminster Theological Seminary_
“So long as we live Christ-honoring lives, speak of Christ to the lost, recognize the world-defying power of gospel witness in any form, and make music that does not compromise biblical teaching, we’re free—joyfully, exuberantly free—to rap as we see fit. This book makes the case better than I can. You should dig into it. You’ll learn much historically, you’ll be blessed by Curt’s scriptural and theological reflections, and you’ll have fun doing it...Almost as much fun as I’m having watching the Lord use my brother as he speaks a prophetic word and blesses God’s church through the use of his artistic and literary gifts.”

Owen Strachan, Director, Center on Gospel and Culture, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“A very sane and very good introduction to a much controverted subject...I have read a lot of cultural analysis, and Allen comes to the subject in fresh ways...this was a really valuable book, and I highly recommend it. I didn’t find myself colliding with any of its basic assumptions on cultural engagement...Gifted Christian poets and lyricists should never be content with throwing their words down into the sinkhole of momentary culture. They should be aiming for something higher, and books like this help.”

Douglas Wilson, author, pastor
“What a thrill for me to see Joe Coffey, a graduate of our first Centurions Program class, apply the biblical worldview principles we teach at BreakPoint and the Colson Center. In this marvelous little book, Joe simply and succinctly lays out the tenets of the Christian faith within the context of the four key life and worldview questions. This is an excellent resource for Christians and non-Christians alike who are seeking the Truth.”

Chuck Colson, Founder of Prison Fellowship and the Colson Center for Christian Worldview

“This book may be the best resource I’ve seen to answer common objections in everyday language.”

Jared Totten, Critical Thinking Blog

“A quick read that packs a punch ... I’m always on the lookout for something like this. Smooth Stones is a winner.”

Mike del Rosario, ApologeticsGuy.com

“Most books on apologetics are too long, too deep, and too complicated. This book has none of these defects. Like its title, it is like a smooth stone from David’s apologetic sling directed right to the mind of an enquiring reader.”

Norman L. Geisler, Distinguished Professor of Apologetics, Veritas Evangelical Seminary, Murrieta, CA
“This is a book the church has desperately needed for some time. It is simply excellent. It will challenge you and guide you in navigating in a more Christlike manner the host of questions surrounding same-sex attraction and the local church.”

Danny Akin, Pres., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“…To stand on what we believe is clear in Scripture, and to be a friend, at the same time – this book is an important next step for Christian literature on same-sex attraction. It doesn’t simply guide us in wise engagement; it guides us in friendships where there is mutual enjoyment and appreciation. And Brad does this in such a way that he doesn’t cut any theological corners but makes such friendships a necessary expression of our theology.”

Ed Welch, counselor and faculty member, Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation

“Whenever Jesus encountered a sexual minority, he responded with love and friendship instead of shame. Brad Hambrick helps us see how we, too, can create safe space and belonging for our LGBTQ friends. Why? So that these friends, too, can encounter the grace and truth of Jesus. I highly recommend this book.”

Scott Sauls, pastor, Christ Presbyterian Church, Nashville

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Conversations among friends accomplish more than debates between opponents.

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“This book is a masterpiece, and I do not say that lightly. This excellent work, so helpfully spiced with quotations from the Puritans, needs to be read over and over again. I heartily commend it.”

*Martin Holdt, Pastor; editor, Reformation Africa South*

“Joel Beeke’s characteristic clarity, biblical fidelity, and unflinching care as to detail and pastoral wisdom is obvious on every page. This book is an honest and sometimes chilling exposition of the seriousness of backsliding; at the same time, it unfailingly breathes the air of grace and hope. Timely and judicious.”

*Derek W. H. Thomas, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC; Editorial Director, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals*

“Don’t settle for being a spiritual shrimp,’ argues Dr. Beeke. The pity is that too many modern Christians are opting for shrimpishly small degrees of grace. Indwelling sin drags the careless believer down into guilty backsliding. This book is a prescription for the believer who feels his guilt.”

*Maurice Roberts, former editor, Banner of Truth magazine*

“Dr. Beeke outlines the best means of bringing balm and healing to the backslidden soul. Highly recommended.”

*Michael Haykin, Professor, Southern Baptist Theo. Sem.*
Online pornography is not just a problem for Christian men; it is THE problem. Many men, young and old, in our churches need Sexual Detox. Challies offers practical, doable and, above all, gospel-centered hope for men. I want every man I serve and all the guys on our staff to read this book. 

_Tedd Tripp, Pastor, and author of Shepherding a Child's Heart_

Tim Challies strikes just the right balance in this necessary work. His assessment of the sexual epidemic in our culture is sober but not without hope. His advice is practical but avoids a checklist mentality. His discussion of sexual sin is frank without being inappropriate. This book will be a valuable resource.

_ Kevin DeYoung, Pastor and author_

Thank God for using Tim to articulate simply and unashamedly the truth about sex amidst a culture of permissiveness.

_Ben Zobrist, Tampa Bay Rays_

_Sexual Detox is just what we need. It is clear, honest, and biblical, written with a tone that is knowing but kind, exhortative but gracious, realistic but determined. We have been given by Tim Challies a terrific resource for fighting sin and exalting Christ._

_Owen Strachan, Boyce College_
"I really, really like this book...John helps us see and live in the relentless grace and sure direction of the Father in the face of our seemingly unbearable real-life trials. He writes wisely, not from untried theory, but fire-tested experience."

**Glenn T. Stanton, Director of Family Formation Studies, Focus on the Family**

"I've always marveled at Joseph's perspective in Genesis 50:20. He acknowledged the deep pain his brothers had inflicted on him, but also recognized God’s sovereign ability to transform his personal pain into something beautiful. I had the same feeling as I read Broken Vows. John Greco does a beautiful job making it clear that though he never wanted his marriage to end, he would never trade the intimacy he now enjoys with his Heavenly Father. This book is filled with wisdom from cover to cover. It’s the overflow of a painful personal struggle that resulted in a life full of authenticity and hope."

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Thabiti Anyabwile, Author; Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Grand Cayman; Council Member, The Gospel Coalition

“Curt Allen’s book on interpreting the Bible is wonderfully practical and clear, giving believers basic principles for understanding God’s Word. He rightly emphasizes that every believer can understand the Bible. It isn’t necessary to be a scholar or preacher or to know Greek and Hebrew to grasp the Scriptures. Certainly, we are helped by teachers and scholars, but we can understand the Bible ourselves and need to test whatever others say by the Scriptures. Allen also shows that the Bible is Christ-centered. We are only reading the Bible rightly if we are seeing Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord, in its pages. At the same time, the Bible is not just meant to be understood but to be lived out in our everyday lives. I recommend gladly such an accessible, Christ-centered, and practical book on interpreting the Scriptures.”

Thomas R. Schreiner, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
“Is there really one thing, above all else, that can be demonstrated to be the secret? Bill Farley has made his case and it is compelling. Oh, what biblical wisdom is contained in this brief book. Reading it has given me greater earnestness to pursue the path of joy Farley has here mapped so skillfully. May God be pleased to use this book to do the same for innumerable other Christian pilgrims.”

Bruce A. Ware, author; Chairman, Department of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Continuing his explorations of how the biblical gospel both fuels and shapes the cultivation of Christ-like virtues, Bill Farley turns his attention to the joy that sadly seems to elude so many believers. He interweaves solid theology with practical illustrations so that all who read this short but powerful book can emerge with a trustworthy and clear understanding of how to recognize and experience this gracious blessing from the Lord.”

Randal Roberts, President, Western Seminary

“Bill Farley wants to obliterate our propensities for grumbling and self-pity. This may prove to be a dangerous book for those who wallow in dispositions that are antithetical to the Christian gospel.”

Art Azurdia, Senior Minister, Trinity Church (Portland, OR); Director, Doctor of Ministry Program, Western Seminary