

D-LIFE BOOT CAMP

Training for a lifestyle
of discipleship.



Keeping it Real

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

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PROTECTING HUMAN AUTHORITY "Drugs and Alcohol" Part 1

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DOING DRUGS?

Key Scriptures: **Galatians 5:19-21, Revelation 9:20-21, Revelation 18:23**

Introduction:

In modern English, separate terms (words) distinguish medicines, chemicals, and illicit drugs. As used in most contexts, a "pharmacist" and a "drug dealer" both distribute chemicals, but of different kinds and for drastically different reasons. Because English vernacular uses entirely different words, phrases like *selling drugs* evoke something illicit while *taking meds* or prescription drugs don't imply anything nefarious. Ancient Greeks used words like *pharmakeia* to refer to that entire spectrum: from medicines to psychoactives to poisons. This makes cultural and biblical context crucial when interpreting terms related to *pharmakeia*.

The word "**pharmakeia**" may sound unfamiliar to many, but its biblical implications are significant. Found in the New Testament, **pharmakeia** is typically translated as "**sorcery**" or "**witchcraft**," but the root word from which we get "pharmacy" and "pharmaceutical" hints at a broader meaning. In this Bible study, we'll dive into the scriptural context of **pharmakeia**, and how it applies to us today.

1. Understanding the Word "Pharmakeia" in Scripture

The term **pharmakeia** appears three times in the New Testament and is always associated with sinful practices. Here are the key references:

- **Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV):**
“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and **witchcraft** (*pharmakeia*); hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- **Revelation 9:20-21 (NIV):**
“The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts (*pharmakeia*), their sexual immorality or their thefts.”
- **Revelation 18:23 (NIV):**
“The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world’s important people. By your magic spell (*pharmakeia*) all the nations were led astray.”

In these passages, ***pharmakeia*** is translated as “witchcraft” or “sorcery,” but it’s connected to practices of manipulation, deception, and the misuse of substances to control or alter the mind and body.

2. Historical and Cultural Context of Pharmakeia

In the ancient world, *pharmakeia* referred not only to the use of drugs or potions but also to **occult practices, including spells, incantations, and rituals**. It was often linked to pagan religious practices, where drugs or potions were used to induce altered states of consciousness in order to communicate with deities or spirits.

- **Pharmakeia and Paganism:** The use of drugs in ancient religious rituals was common in Greek and Roman cultures, where substances were used to induce trance-like states for mystical experiences. This often led to worship practices that included idolatry, sexual immorality, and communication with demonic forces.
- **Pharmakeia and Sorcery:** Sorcery, in biblical terms, involved the manipulation of people and situations through occult practices. The use of drugs or potions in these contexts was meant to control others, whether through physical means (altering the mind) or spiritual deception.

3. Pharmakeia in the Physical Realm: Substances and Addiction

In the ancient world, ***pharmakeia*** involved the use of potions, drugs, and concoctions to alter the mind, body, or consciousness. Today, it can be seen in the misuse of substances (such as drugs or alcohol) to escape reality, numb pain, or induce altered states of consciousness. Here's how it works:

- **Chemical Alteration of the Brain:** Certain substances impact the brain's neurochemistry by manipulating dopamine, serotonin, or other chemicals that control mood, perception, and behavior. This temporary "high" or altered state may give a sense of euphoria, escape, or relief from problems. However, over time, these substances damage the brain and lead to dependence or addiction.
- **Physical and Psychological Dependence:** Drugs, alcohol, and certain substances can create physical cravings, where the body becomes dependent on the drug to function normally. Psychological dependence occurs when individuals feel they need the substance to cope with emotional pain, stress, or trauma.
- **Spiritual Bondage through Addiction:** The Bible often portrays addiction as a form of bondage because it enslaves individuals to their desires and cravings, making them dependent on something other than God for satisfaction and fulfillment. In this way, *pharmakeia* works by keeping people in a cycle of dependency, preventing them from finding true peace and freedom in Christ.

4. Pharmakeia in the Bible: The Spiritual Dangers

The Bible categorizes ***pharmakeia*** as a work of the flesh, something that leads people away from God and toward destruction. When we look at its use in Galatians and Revelation, it's clear that ***pharmakeia*** represents more than just physical drug use—it symbolizes spiritual rebellion and manipulation.

- **Galatians 5:19-21:** Paul lists *pharmakeia* (witchcraft) among other "acts of the flesh," which are contrary to the fruit of the Spirit. This indicates that *pharmakeia* represents not only occult practices but also any attempt to replace God with something or someone else, using physical or spiritual means.

- **Revelation 9:20-21 & 18:23:** In these passages, *pharmakeia* is linked to deception. The nations are described as being led astray by sorcery. This suggests that the misuse of drugs or occult practices had a widespread impact on people's hearts, leading them away from God and into rebellion, even as God was calling them to repentance.

5. Pharmakeia in the Spiritual Realm: Occult Practices and Deception

The spiritual side of *pharmakeia* refers to its connection with sorcery, witchcraft, and the manipulation of spiritual forces. In the ancient world, drugs or potions were often used to invoke spirits, connect with deities, or enter into altered states of consciousness for occult purposes. Here's how this spiritual manipulation works:

- **Altered Consciousness for Spiritual Manipulation:** Many occult practices involve substances that alter the state of the mind, making the practitioner more susceptible to spiritual deception. Ancient sorcery and witchcraft often involved invoking spirits, casting spells, and manipulating natural and supernatural forces to gain control or power. These practices blurred the line between the physical and spiritual worlds.
- **Connection to Demonic Influence:** Biblically, sorcery and witchcraft (often connected to *pharmakeia*) are associated with demonic influence. The use of drugs or potions in occult practices opened doors to demonic activity, leading people into spiritual deception and bondage. This connection with evil spirits allowed sorcerers or practitioners to manipulate events or people, but at the cost of their own spiritual freedom.
- **False Healing or Empowerment:** Sometimes, those involved in *pharmakeia* believed they could heal or gain power through their practices. This false sense of control or empowerment led them further away from God, who is the true source of healing and power. Today, modern New Age or occult practices may use substances (like hallucinogens or psychedelics) to offer a counterfeit spiritual experience, but these often lead to deeper spiritual confusion or bondage.

6. Modern Applications: Pharmakeia and Today's Culture

While we may not see ancient pagan rituals in most societies today, the principles behind *pharmakeia* are still relevant. Consider these areas where modern culture may reflect the essence of *pharmakeia*:

- **Drug Use and Addiction:** In today's world, the misuse of substances for recreational or mind-altering purposes reflects a modern-day form of *pharmakeia*. Addiction leads to spiritual, physical, and emotional destruction, drawing people away from God and into bondage.
- **New Age and Occult Practices:** Many modern spiritual movements still engage in practices that mirror ancient sorcery—using crystals, potions, hallucinogens, or rituals to manipulate spiritual forces or tap into altered states of consciousness.
- **Deception through Media and Influences:** The enemy often uses subtle forms of *pharmakeia* to lead people astray, whether through entertainment, false ideologies, or worldviews that numb us spiritually and cloud our discernment.

7. Pharmakeia's Effects on Individuals

The way *pharmakeia* works is both internal and external, targeting individuals in specific ways:

- **Separation from God:** At its core, *pharmakeia* leads people away from God by offering a substitute for true spiritual fulfillment. Whether it's drug addiction or occult practices, it creates a dependency on something other than God. This blocks an individual's relationship with God, leading to spiritual darkness or blindness.
- **Deception and Delusion:** One of the most dangerous aspects of *pharmakeia* is its power to deceive. Those involved often believe they are gaining wisdom, power, or control, but in reality, they are being led further into delusion. As seen in Revelation, *pharmakeia* deceives entire nations and societies, creating a false sense of security, healing, or empowerment.
- **Physical and Spiritual Destruction:** In both the physical and spiritual realms, *pharmakeia* is destructive. Addiction destroys the body and mind, leading to death, while spiritual manipulation leads to eternal separation from God. Revelation warns that those who engage in *pharmakeia* and do not repent will face judgment (Revelation 9:21; 18:23).