

Hatred Complex: Drug Abuse: the Etymology of *Pharmakeia* from Classical Greek to New Testament Koine:  
Vine, Liddell & Scott, Arndt & Gingrich, Youngblood

- 6) Drug abuse: The result of poor decisions that originate from a disoriented soul is a corrupt soul. Physically it destroys the neurons of the brain and ultimate loss of restraint due to ingestion, inhalation, or inoculation of artificial chemicals that the brain no longer has to provide naturally, thus leading to dependency.

The Bible addresses this issue in both the Old and New Testaments. English versions usually translate both the Hebrew and Greek words with “sorcery,” “sorcerer,” or their plurals.

The Hebrew verb form is קָשַׁף *kashaph*. It and its variants are found in Isaiah 47:9, 12; Jeremiah 27:9; Exodus 7:11; Daniel 2:2; and Malachi 3:5. In the Septuagint the word group is translated into Koine Greek as **φαρμακός**, *pharmakos* and **φαρμακεία**, *pharmakia*, which mean the “employment of drugs” or “one who deals in drugs.”

W. E. Vine provides more details:

Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 1064-65:

PHARMAKIA (English, pharmacy) primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then poisoning; then sorcery, Galatians 5:20, mentioned as one of “the works of the flesh.” In sorcery, the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals to occult powers, with the provision of various charms, amulets, etc., professedly designed to keep the applicant or patient from the attention and power of demons, but actually to impress the applicant with the mysterious resources and powers of the sorcerer.

Vine points out that *pharmakia* originally referred to “medication,” then later, because of abuse, it became associated with “poison,” and then under the influence of demon-possessed practitioners it became identified with “sorcery.”

Classical Greek tracks the use of this word down to the fifth century B.C. For this we consult:

Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott (comps.). *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Trans. Henry Stuart Jones. New ed. (New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), 1917:

**φαρμακῶ** [*pharmakoō*], to suffer from the effect of drugs or charms. **II. φαρμακεία** [*pharmakeia*], use of drugs, especially of purgatives [laxatives]; of abortifacients [drugs that induce an abortion]: generally, the use of any kind of drugs, potions, or spells. 2. Poisoning or witchcraft. **φαρμακεύς** [*pharmakeus*] a poisoner, sorcerer.

2. Use of enchantments, to practice sorcery. To drug a person; to give him a poisonous or stupefying drug. **φαρμακίτης** [*pharmakitēs*], drugged or medicated.

**φάρμακον** [*pharmakon*]. 1. A drug. 2. Healing remedy, medicine. 3. Enchanted potion, charm, spell. 4. Poison.

**φάρμακος** [*pharmakos*], poisoner, sorcerer, magician.

**φαρμακῶ** [*pharmakoō*], to medicate, to be endowed with healing power against pains. In the passive voice, to be poisoned. 2. To be bewitched.

**φάρμαξις** [*pharmazis*], 1. Medical treatment. 2. Witchery.

**φαρμάσσω** [*pharmassō*] 1. Heal or relieve by medicine. 2. Enchant or bewitch by potions or [philters](#) [1: a potion credited with magical power. 2: a potion, drug, or charm held to have the power to arouse sexual passion. (MWCD-11)]. 3. Poison.

The secondary and tertiary definitions of the word group are brought into the New Testament's Koine Greek. Further documentation is provided for these by:

**Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 854:**

**φαρμακεία** [*pharmakeia*], sorcery, magic, magic arts.

**φαρμακεύς** [*pharmakeus*], mixer of poisons, magician.

**φαρμακεύω** [*pharmakeuō*], to mix poison, make potions, practice magic.

**φάρμακον** [*pharmakon*], 1. Poison. 2. Magic potion, charm. 3. Medicine, remedy, drug.

**φάρμακος** [*pharmakos*], poisoner; magician.

A final note on this from:

**Youngblood, Ronald F. (gen. ed.). *Nelson's New International Bible Dictionary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 789-80:**

(The) New Testament word translated "sorcery" comes from the same Greek word as our English word "pharmacy." Quite obviously this has to do with drugs; a more relevant and contemporary application could hardly be found. The denunciations contained in Revelation 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; and 22:15 apply to those who use drugs to bring on trances during which they claim to have supernatural knowledge or power.

The importance of taking the time to document the etymology of the *pharmakeia* word group is to impress upon young people and even adults who are old hippies still trying to adjust is that the abuse of hallucinogenic drugs has been a problem for the 35-hundred years that this research has documented. The Lord incorporated prohibitions against it in the Mosaic Law. The Greeks recognized it down to the fifth century B.C. Paul and John denounce it in the New Testament.