

Alcohol in the Bible

I. PLAIN AND SIMPLE COMMON SENSE

1 Cor. 10:23-25, MESSAGE - "Looking at it one way, you could say, "Anything goes. Because of God's immense generosity and grace, we don't have to dissect and scrutinize every action to see if it will pass muster." But the point is not to just get by. We want to live well, but our foremost efforts should be to help *others* live well.

SO, while there is no direct command for complete abstinence from drink in Scripture, can you REALLY drink in moderation (without becoming drunk), while keeping a discerning mind, not causing others to stumble? When you drink, will you not be around people who ARE drunk, not have your judgment impaired, and will drinking really be better for your spiritual life?

Personally, I have NEVER MET anyone who drinks where the alcohol has had positive effects in their lives and relationships.

Tell me how many people concerned with whether drinking is a "sin" are actually able to drink without being adversely affected in one way or another by it, or without influencing OTHERS to drink who MAY be adversely affected by it. Many people end up doing things they shouldn't, saying things they shouldn't, and being around people they shouldn't. Alcohol makes you lazy and tired. People take chances that they'll escape the addictive element of alcohol. Many people are "social drinkers" until a problem comes and they keep going back to "drown their sorrows." And for what positive effects? List the positive things alcohol does for people and line it up against the negatives. Many people are hurt and made sorry by drinking, few are sorry they don't drink.

The issue doesn't become "can I drink and still make it into heaven," but rather "will drinking hurt my spiritual or physical life or have a negative influence on those around me?" God wants us to be separated from the world, more than conquerors, and strong in His spirit and the power of His might, having only those things good, just, true and perfect in our minds, as we bring every thought captive to obey Him. He desires ALL we do to PROSPER. He lives in US to show unbelievers His GLORY. Is drinking really going to contribute to spiritual success in these areas?

The pursuit of excellence requires a sober mind controlled by God's indwelling Spirit. There are numerous warnings concerning the deceitfulness of sin and the tendencies of our fleshly nature.

II. PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Is it sinful to drink wine? The answer to this question is that the wine itself is not sinful, because sin is in the heart of man and does not exist in any object of itself. It is the drunkenness and intoxication that comes about when a man drinks too much that causes him sin.

A. The Kind of People God Uses. The Nazarites took a vow to separate themselves unto the Lord and therefore they would not drink any wine or alcoholic beverages. About John the Baptist, in Luke 1:15-16, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink;... And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.' Another powerful witness in his generation, Daniel, when given the opportunity to drink wine: Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." About bishops: Titus 1:7-8, "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, **not given to wine**...But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, **sober**, just holy temperate.

Don't you want to be used by God? How can God use you as a witness to others if you have no self-control, are setting a bad example to others, and are behaving just like the world by drinking and getting high? God's Word tells us that for us to be used by God, we must be sober and avoid intoxicating substances.

These men were used by God in a mighty way. God was able to use them because they did not defile their bodies or minds with alcohol or drugs. Do you think anyone would have listened to John the Baptist or Daniel or the disciples if they would have been hanging out at the bar during happy hour and getting drunk?

And if you are a Christian who is thinking, "But I'm not a bishop or deacon or someone chosen like John the Baptist. I'm just trying to enjoy a little wine with my meal," I want you to think on this: If you are truly saved and have been adopted into God's family, you are now called kings, priests, and saints. (Revelation 1:5-6, and 5.10). And the Bible says this of its kings and royalty: Proverbs 31:4 "It is not for **kings**, O Lemuel, it is not for **kings** to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." So, we need to stop living like the world, and start living like God's holy royal people!

B. The Most Excellent Way: Not Playing Around with Addictive Substances and Things That LEAD to Sin.

Phil. 1:10 "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;..." The word "excellent" is a Greek word meaning "be of MORE VALUE" - "differ - by SURPASSING" - "be BETTER." The word "sincere" is a Greek word meaning "tested as genuine." "Without offense" literally means inoffensive, not leading into sin, FAULTLESS."

1 COR 6.12-15 (MESSAGE) "Just because something is technically legal doesn't mean that it's spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims.

It isn't a matter of "is it bad," but "is it GOOD for me?" Does it improve your life and your witness? Does it help you be more godly? Does it help you focus on "excellent" things and be around people of excellence? Does alcohol help you to pursue EXCELLENCE in all things?

III. SOME BIBLE VERSES ABOUT ALCOHOL

1 Corinthians 6:10 lists drunkards among those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, NOR DRUNKARDS, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 5:11, 13 "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not to eat... therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Romans 13:13 says that we are to "behave properly as in the day not in carousing and drunkenness."

Eph. 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

1 Cor. 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (How can you have the mind of Christ when it's all fuzzy?)

Rom. 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and

acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

(We're to RENEW our minds not fuzzy or "loosen" them up.)

Proverbs 23:31-32 "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Prov. 20:1 Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Galatians 5:21 "Envyings, murders, DRUNKENNESS, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that THEY WHICH DO SUCH THINGS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

Proverbs 23:19-21, "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty."

Isaiah 5:11, 22 "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. "

Hosea 4:11 "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart."

HOW DOES GOD WANT US TO LIVE? Titus 2:11-12 tells us, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly**, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

1 Peter 4:7, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore **sober**, and watch unto prayer."

1 Thessalonians 5:8 But let us, who are of the day, **be sober**, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

Titus 2:2-6, "That the aged men **be sober**, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, **not given to much wine**, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to **be sober**, to love their husbands, to love their children... Young men likewise exhort to be **soberminded**.

IV. ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

A. Alcohol clearly affects your reasoning and judgment - as little as a glass of wine can lower your inhibitions and affect your judgment, tempting you get into things that you would have avoided had you not been intoxicated.

Isaiah 28:7, "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink. They are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."

How many people have been killed because of drunk drivers? How many babies have been aborted because two drunken strangers had sex that they later regretted? How many men and women have committed crimes under the influence of alcohol? So what should our position be as Christians since we know the many sorrows that drunkenness causes? We know that alcoholism is responsible for many broken homes because of the abusive behavior toward family and others. We know the many deaths on our highways caused by drinking and driving. What about the many premature deaths caused by health problems stemming from alcoholism? Yes, drunkenness has adversely affected many in our nation.

SEE STATISTICS OF ALCOHOL ATTACHMENT.

B, Satan gets an INROAD to your life to steal, kill and destroy when your defenses are down and you are not sober.

1 Pet. 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

In John 10:10 God says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (NIV) Abuse of alcohol has ruined many lives, not provided "abundant" life.

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your **thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** (RSV) Many people under the influence of alcohol do things they regret later.

C. Alcohol hurts our bodies.

Our bodies are temples of the living God via the agent of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19) God is concerned with how we treat our

bodies. (1 Corinthians 3:17)

Short-term effects of alcohol use include:

- distorted vision, hearing, and coordination
- altered perceptions and emotions
- impaired judgment
- hangovers

Some problems like those above can occur after drinking a small amount and over a relatively short period of time. But other problems, such as liver disease (affecting more than 2 million Americans), heart disease, certain forms of cancer, and pancreatitis, often develop more gradually and may become evident only after years of drinking. Women may develop alcohol-related health problems sooner than men, and from drinking less alcohol than men. Because alcohol affects nearly every organ in the body, long-term drinking increases the risk for many serious health problems.

SEE STATISTICS OF ALCOHOL ATTACHED FOR EFFECTS ON OUR BRAINS.

D. Drinking Hurts Many People; and You can cause weaker people to stumble.

Parents' drinking behavior and favorable attitudes about drinking have been positively associated with teens initiating and continuing drinking (see NIAAA, 1997). Maybe the parents CAN meet the Scriptural criteria for drinking (see Pursuit of Excellence below) – can their teens do the same?

By drinking "even just a little" people may feel that if a person of your reputation and carrying the name of the Lord drinks, it's OK for them too, and they may not be able to never get drunk like you are able to.

Although, a Christian may be free to drink moderately as long as they do not become drunk, is that the highest thing we should do? Paul stated in the New Testament that he would not allow his liberty to be a license to sin, nor would he do anything that would cause a brother to stumble.

Galatians 5:13: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

1 Corinthians 8:9: "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."

Rom. 14:21 *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

Are those interested in drinking alcohol really seeking what would please Jesus first and foremost? **Since over 18 million Americans meet the criteria of alcoholic**, wouldn't it be pleasing to Him if we loved others enough to give up those things we could have, for a greater cause? Would it not be a more powerful witness to others in our age to stand out as one who did not drink alcoholic beverages because we had no need to do so. When we are filled with the Spirit of God, His spirit gives us the joy and release that many are seeking by drinking. May we instead desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit and have no need for other "spirits."

E. Drinking is Addictive; You MAY Become Addicted!!

"...You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do."

(Rom. 6:16, MESSAGE)

Although drinking in accordance with Scriptural principles stated above is not cited as sin in itself, most people will not be able to drink without it adversely affecting their lives or relationships in one way or another. There are certainly enough warnings to merit total abstinence for any believer who would decide to put aside any hindrances in his personal pursuit of the glory of God to pursue EXCELLENT things. Be careful about the decisions you make and determine that nothing will distract you from the pursuit of God's glory and excellence in your lives.