

# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Alcohol Use?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

## Introduction:

"I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories, from a sense of insupportable loneliness and a dread of some strange impending doom. When I could stop I didn't want to, and now that I want to stop, I cannot." (Edgar Allan Poe) On October 3, 1849, Poe was found on the streets of Baltimore delirious from the long term effects of alcoholism. He never recovered coherency, and died four days later in agony at Washington College Hospital.

## I. THE IMPACT OF ALCOHOL USE

A. Out of every eight persons who take their first drink of alcohol, one of them will become a lifelong alcoholic.

1. The World Health Organization has estimated that as of 2016, there were 380 million people with alcoholism worldwide (5.1% of the population over 15 years of age).
2. As of 2015 in the United States, about 17 million (7%) of adults and 700,000 (2.8%) of those age 12 to 17 years of age are alcoholics.
3. Alcoholism directly resulted in 139,000 deaths in the US in 2013, up from 112,000 deaths in 1990.
4. A total of 3.3 million deaths yearly worldwide (5.9% of all deaths) are believed to be due to alcohol.
5. Alcoholism reduces a person's life expectancy by about ten years.

B. Physical impact

1. Excessive alcohol use can damage all organ systems, but it particularly affects the brain, heart, liver, pancreas and immune system.
2. Alcoholism can result in mental illness, delirium tremens, Wernicke–Korsakoff syndrome, irregular heartbeat, an impaired immune response, liver cirrhosis, and increased cancer risk.
3. Drinking during pregnancy can result in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. Women are generally more sensitive than men to the harmful effects of alcohol, primarily due to their smaller body weight, lower capacity to metabolize alcohol, and higher proportion of body fat.
4. Prolonged, severe alcohol misuse frequently leads to cognitive impairment and early dementia. (Wikipedia)

C. Social and familial impact

1. Serious social problems arise from alcohol use disorder; these dilemmas are caused by the pathological changes in the brain and the intoxicating effects of alcohol.
2. Alcohol misuse is associated with an increased risk of committing criminal offences, including child abuse, domestic violence, rape, burglary and assault.

3. Alcoholism is often associated with loss of employment, which can lead to financial problems or legal consequences, such as criminal charges for drunk driving or public disorder, or penalties for actionable behavior.
  4. An alcoholic's behavior and mental impairment while drunk can profoundly affect those surrounding him and lead to isolation from family and friends. This can lead to marital conflict and divorce, or contribute to domestic violence and child neglect or abuse, with subsequent lasting damage to the emotional development of children. For this reason, children of people with alcohol use disorders can develop a number of emotional problems.
  5. In 2010, alcohol misuse cost the United States 249 billion dollars.
  6. Alcohol is responsible for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms.
  7. In 2016, 10,497 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for 28% of all traffic-related deaths in the United States. Twenty one people die each day in drunk driver-related accidents-averaging out to one person every fifty minutes.
- D. Now, these are the big scary facts about alcoholism.
1. However, I'm certain every alcoholic started out saying to himself, "I can handle it; it's just a little social drinking."
  2. Likewise, Christians often say to themselves, "Since I have no intention of becoming one of those alcoholic statistics, I can do a little social drinking and not be guilty of sin."
  3. Can Christians drink socially? Can they have a few beers on the weekend or have a cocktail after work to relax or a glass of wine to take the edge off of the stress of the day?

## II. MATTER OVER MIND

- A. Thought - Sin always begins with a thought - James 1:13-15
- B. Consideration - Contemplating sin in the mind - Psalm 4:4; Mark 7:18-23
- C. Attitude - Form or adjust a belief about the sin; begin to rationalize
  1. Prov. 4:23, 14:9; 1Kings 16:31
- D. Action - Gives himself enough rationale to entertain the desires of the flesh, so he performs the sin he pondered - Psalm 7:14; Prov. 29:6
- E. Habit - At this stage, the person has committed it a number of times, and gives it an ongoing place in his life - John 8:34; 2Peter 2:18-19
- F. Addiction - At this point the person has become addicted, and because of inertia and the power of sin, he becomes reprobate; he will be unable to remove it from his life
  1. Reprobate - a mind void of judgment or an un-approving mind (Strongs)
  2. Heb. 3:13; Rom. 1:28; 2Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:16
- G. At this point it is too late - Heb. 6:4-6, 10:26-27; Rom. 7:22-25

## III. MIND OVER MATTER

- A. Realize that giving in to addiction is sin and not a psychological deficiency or disease.

1. Humankind minimizes sin with familiarity, amusement, TV pop psychology, euphemisms, and ersatz comparisons - Prov. 14:9, 10:23
- B. Take responsibility for actions
  1. Gen. 3:11-13; Matt. 27:24; Luke 19:8; 1Tim. 1:12-15
- C. Realize one cannot do it alone, and then seek out God's help
  1. 2Cor. 10:3-5; Phil. 4:13
- D. Destroy everything associated with the sin including risky associations
  1. Eph. 4:22; Mark 9:43-47
- E. Begin rebuilding and reclaiming your mind - Eph. 4:23; Rom. 13:13-14, 12:1-2
- F. Get busy in God's work - Eph. 4:24, 2:10
- G. Rest in the promises of God - Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20; 1Peter 5:10; 2Tim. 4:8

#### **IV. WHY CHRISTIANS DO NOT USE ALCOHOL**

- A. Alcohol impairs judgment at every level of use
  1. Kings and rulers are instructed to abstain - Prov. 31:4-5
  2. It is reserved for the dying and destroyed - Prov. 31:6-7
    - a. Alcohol is not for those who would be wise or responsible
- B. Temperance is a commandment - Gal. 5:22-23; 1Cor. 6:10-13; 2Peter 1:5-8
  1. Temperance - egkrateuomai - "to exercise self-restraint or self-control in diet and chastity; contain, be temperate; generic in form and application" (Strong's)
- C. Social drinking is not compatible with our profession in Christ
  1. We are to dedicate ourselves to doing the will of God, not the parties of men - 1Peter 4:1-2
  2. We abstain from partying regardless of what others think of the abstention; in fact, because of it - 1Peter 4:3-4
- D. We abstain because others need us to
  1. Concern for the weaknesses of others - Rom. 14:14-15
  2. Concern for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit - Rom. 14:16-18
  3. Concern for the spiritual safety of others - Rom. 14:19-20
  4. We must love them more than any presumed right to drink - Rom. 14:21
  5. Evidently Timothy had chosen to forego wine for this reason; Paul prescribed that Timothy drink wine for medicinal purposes - 1Tim. 5:23
    - a. To take Paul medical prescription for Timothy's physical ailment and use it to justify drinking alcohol in social settings is the same thing as taking someone's prescription for painkillers and using them recreationally.
    - b. That which proves too much proves nothing.
- E. We abstain because God made us stewards of our influence - Rom. 14:13-21
  1. Should Christians recreationally engage in an activity (social drinking) that contributes to:
    - a. The number one drug problem in our country? (1 in 13 Americans have a problem with alcoholism)
    - b. The senseless killing of 11,000 victims a year? (half of all driving related accidents involve driving under the influence of alcohol)
    - c. An estimated 25% of divorces? (which God hates - Mal 2:16)

2. The responsibility of the Christian regarding influence is clear
  - a. Rom. 14:21; 1Cor. 10:31-33
  - b. Only the insensitive and selfish Christian would try to justify engaging in social drinking today
  - c. The mature Christian considers whether the practice glorifies God and benefits his fellow human beings
- F. It is sin - Gal. 5:19-21 - "And the like"
  1. His list is not to be taken as all inclusive; the sins listed are to give us a basic idea of the kind of things we are to avoid
  2. We must apply discernment on many activities which may not be specifically condemned in the Scriptures
    - a. Many people want a "Thou shall not..." for anything to be wrong
    - b. But the Bible does not list everything that is wrong (if it did, we would have to carry it around in a wheel barrow)
    - c. Instead, we are given basic principles of conduct, with some specific examples to illustrate such principles - Heb. 5:12-14
  3. How can we know when something not specifically addressed is sin?
    - a. Gal. 5:19-25
    - b. Is the active like the works of the flesh?
    - c. Or is it like the fruit of the Spirit?

Conclusion:

- A. "I'm tired of hearing sin called sickness and alcoholism a disease. It is the only disease I know of that we're spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year to spread. All sins tend to be addictive, and the terminal point of addiction is damnation." (W. H. Auden)
- B. 1Cor. 6:19-20; 1Peter 5:8