

The Christian and Alcohol

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In many societies the greatest problem with addiction is not the various illicit drugs that people somehow get and use but the consumption of alcohol which is more easily available. Because of alcohol abuse great damage is not only done to society and economy but also to unborn life (foetal alcohol syndrome). Many children suffer from severe consequences because of their parents' life style. Their physical growth and their mental development are significantly hindered. The easiest and most logical approach to the problem of alcohol is complete abstinence. What would be our arguments in favour of such a life style?

I. Scripture Has a Negative Attitude toward Alcohol

- Negative examples:
 - Noah – Gen 9:20-27
 - Lot – Gen 19:30-38
 - Belshazzar – Dan 5:1-6
- The warning against the use of alcohol – Prov 23:29-35
(cf. Judg 13:3-5; Luke.1:15)
- Jesus and alcohol – Matt 27:33-34, 48

The term “wine” as used in Scripture does not always refer to fermented wine but can also mean grape juice.

II. Alcohol Is Harmful

Research has shown that alcohol is harmful, even in small doses. Here are some of the potential physical damages that may happen: destruction of liver cells (e.g., fatty liver or cirrhosis), destruction of cells of the heart muscle (cardiac insufficiency and heart failure), destruction of brain cells, inflammation of the nerves (neuritis), etc. However, harmful effects are not limited to physical problems. There may also be mental-emotional damages such as a decline of memory, decline of productivity and performance, depressions, fear and disappointment with oneself, etc.

Alcohol is linked to family violence, accidents, and other problematic behavior.

Ronny A. Bell, PhD, MS, et al., of the department of public health sciences at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, says: “Alcohol is by no means a safe drug, nor something that can in any way be recommended for health promotion. Suggesting that alcohol is somehow beneficial is so outweighed by its toxicity as to be criminal.”

Dr. W. Feuerlein of the German Society of the Investigation and Therapy of addiction has emphasized that even in small quantities alcohol is absolute dangerous for certain groups of persons such as persons suffering from an illness of the liver or pancreas, diabetics, those with epileptic seizures, and all those who are in danger of becoming alcohol dependants.

Dr. F. Portheine of the Academy of Occupational Medicine in Berlin has pointed out that alcohol is a neurotoxic substance which is harmful in smallest quantities. It reduces protective fear and stimulates daredevilry and primitive passions. The sense of responsibility suffers immensely.

III. Alcohol May Become Addictive

No moderate drinker has a guarantee that he or she will not become addicted. If persons are used to drinking moderately, under severe circumstances they may drink more and the pathway to addiction is established.

IV. The Issue of Stewardship

- Because everything belongs to God, our body is also God's property. God does not want this property to be destroyed but to be preserved and cared for like a sanctuary – 1 Cor 6:19-20; 10:31. Alcohol destroys God's temple, our body.
- Our financial means are also God's and should be used to his glory. To use our finances to destroy his body through the use of alcohol proves himself or herself to be an irresponsible steward of what God has entrusted to him or her – Hag 2:8.

V. The Issue of Being Examples

- Christians are called to be examples for others and help them to get oriented. Christians want to help not to imperil others.
- Those who drink moderately are a danger, because they mislead others. The influence of an alcoholic is less stimulating than the influence of a moderate drinker.
- Those who drink moderately are a danger for dry alcoholics who are also tempted to drink again. The smallest dose of alcohol may cause them to backslide into alcoholism.
- We are responsible for each other and should not just live as it pleases us – 1 Cor 8:13; Rom 14:19-21; 15:1-3.
- In order to be of real help we need to be completely abstinent.

Someone was noted that alcoholism is a thirst for God on a low level. Whether this is true or not, we have found Jesus and salvation in him. We do not need alcohol or other drugs to quench our spiritual thirst.

The same biblical principles that apply to the use of alcohol are also applicable to the use of tobacco and illicit drugs.