

TOWARD A BIBLICAL VIEW OF ALCOHOL

Many Christians go to one of two extremes. We want to avoid LEGALISM and LISCENSE.

- Legalism is making rules that are not found in Scripture and expecting all Christians to follow them.
- License is disobeying Scriptures commend in the pursuit of personal freedom.

What are some boundaries and guidelines in Scripture?

- **Obey the law:** Romans 13:1-2, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." *If you are under 21 years of age, it is a sin for you to drink alcohol.*
- **Do not become drunk:** Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery." *If you become drunk, likely even "buzzed", then you sin.*
- **Do not be mastered by alcohol:** 1 Corinthians 6:12, "'Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything." *If you can't "have a good time" without alcohol, then it has mastered you. If you must have a drink at night to calm your nerves, then it has mastered you. If you struggle with alcoholism, then it has mastered you.*
- **Do not drink if it bothers your conscience:** Romans 14:5, "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." *If you can not drink alcohol with a clear conscience, then it is a sin for you to do so.*
- **Do not cause a brother to stumble:** Romans 14:20-21, "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall." *If you drink alcohol alongside someone who is sinning with alcohol, thus encouraging him to do so, then you sin. i.e - If you drink along with someone under-age, if you drink along with someone who is drunk, if you drink at a party where alcohol contributes to peoples irresponsible behavior, if you drink along with an alcoholic, if you drink in front of a 'weaker brother' whose conscience does not allow it.*

There is a difference between a personal boundary and a legalistic rule.

- A personal boundary is an extra-Biblical guideline that I set for myself because of a previous struggle with sin or to help me resist temptation in the future. Personal boundaries are prudent and wise.
- A legalistic rule is an extra-Biblical guideline that I desire to impose on others. If they violate my extra-Biblical rule, then I consider them to have sinned. Legalistic rules are improper and can do much harm.
- *"I have never met a non-Christian whose reason for disbelief involved Christians who moderately and responsibly consumed alcohol. I have met many non-Christians who's reason for disbelief involved the perception that Christians were judgmental, rules-oriented, and legalistic."*

Does the abuse of alcohol mean that all Christians should abstain? No.

- Because mankind abuses and misuses some of God's good gifts, it does not mean that we should abstain from enjoying God's good gifts in a way that glorifies God.
- Is gluttony a reason for self starvation? Is greed a reason for voluntary poverty? Is sexual sin a reason for life long chastity? Are traffic violations a reason to forgo automobiles? No to all.

Are there some good reasons that a Christian would abstain from alcohol? Yes.

- Sometimes, abstinence can be a powerful witness because it is countercultural.
- Another good reason to abstain is the misuse, abuse, and addiction to alcohol in our culture.
- Some Christians abstain because their church encourages it, and they respect their church's leadership.

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Alcohol is mentioned frequently in Scripture, often in a positive manner.

- In worship: Genesis 14:18
- As a blessing from one person to another: Gen 27:28
- As an offering prescribed by God: Num 15
- As a divine blessing from God to his people: Deuteronomy 11
- As payment for the Levite priests: 2 Chronicles 31
- As an occasion for Joy: Psalm 4:7
- "Wine makes the heart glad": Psalm 104:15
- Compared to romantic love: Song of Songs
- Jesus made (and drank) wine: John 2
- As an analogy for the work of God and for the Holy Spirit: Luke 5

What are some special considerations for college students?

- **What is "debauchery"?**
 - 1 Peter 4:3 says, "For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness..."
 - Debauchery is what our culture calls **partying**. It is a free-for-all experience that usually involves alcohol and sexually provocative conduct. Most college parties involve debauchery. While drinking by itself is often not a sin, debauchery always is a sin to be avoided by Christians.
 - A Christian should also almost always avoid attending parties in any way that would encourage others to engage in debauchery. Romans 14:20 says "it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble."
- **Seek the good of others.**
 - 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 – "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others... ³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— ³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved."
 - Seek the good of others first. Sometimes it is better for others that you abstain. Sometimes it fine that you eat and drink. Put the glory of God and the good of others first in your decision making.
 - Especially if you are a Christian leader, consider whether drinking would harm your reputation, the reputation of your church or the reputation of your campus ministry. Even if you drink, consider never drinking in public.
- **Respect and love those whose conscience is different.**
 - Romans 14:1-4 - "Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ² One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³ The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴ Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand."
 - Do not judge a fellow believers conviction about alcohol as long as it does not violate a clear command in Scripture. The "weaker" brother should not impose his boundaries on others. The "stronger" brother should not flaunt his freedom.
- **What about party drinking? Should I totally avoid it? Yes.**
 - Is there a difference between having a glass of wine with dinner at your parents' house and party drinking? Yes, there is a substantial difference.
 - Party drinking is the most common type of drinking among college students. It almost always involved over-consumption of alcohol. It almost always involves under-age consumption of alcohol. It almost always involved overt sexual expressions. Should a Christian college student participate in party drinking? No.
 - Should I attend events involving party drinking? Why? Rarely if ever. It is a clear violation of Romans 14:20-21 as you participate in the sin of other – drinking in excess, underage drinking, and being mastered by alcohol.
- **What other occasions deserve special attention and wisdom?**
 - Drinking on the college campus. Drinking in public.
 - Drinking in your apartment if you have underage roommates.
 - Posting photos on social media.