



## Drinking

Drinking alcoholic beverages in moderation is permissible according to Scripture. Drinking to the point of drunkenness and dissipation is forbidden. It is well known that excessive alcohol intake is detrimental to the body, the soul, and the spiritual life of the believer. Such excessive alcohol intake results in physiological changes in the body that changes the thinking and behavior of the drinker.

### Drinking and the Four Laws for Doubtful Things

There are four laws regarding doubtful situations to be considered by believers. These laws apply when drinking alcoholic beverages in the presence of others, especially other believers. Drinking to the point of drunkenness is always condemned as sin in the Word of God. Eph 5:18. See category on [Laws for Doubtful Things](#).

*“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,” (Ephesians 5:18, NASB)*

The Law of Liberty is directed to one's self. Under the Law of Liberty, every Church Age believer has the right to eat and drink any food. As for drinking alcoholic beverages, believers are free to do so. Believers are free to drink alcohol and enjoy its flavor so long as they drink in moderation. Drinking or eating food has no spiritual benefit. 1 Cor. 8:4; 1 Cor. 8:8-9.

*“Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.” (1 Corinthians 8:4, NASB)*

*“But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.” (1 Corinthians 8:8-9, NASB)*

The Law of Expediency is expressed toward unbelievers. This law says that it is expedient to refrain from drinking while witnessing to the unbeliever or when drinking becomes an issue to an unbeliever. The Law of Expediency tells us that all believers are witnesses for Jesus Christ and are to refrain from doing some things, not because they are sin, but because doing them prevents the unbeliever from seeing the true issue of their need for salvation. 1 Cor. 6:12; 1 Cor. 9:22; 1 Cor. 10:23-24.

*“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.” (1 Corinthians 6:12, NASB)*

*“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22, NASB)*

*“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.” (1 Corinthians 10:23-24, NASB)*

The Law of Love is directed toward other believers. The Law of Love rules out drinking in the presence of a weaker or immature believer, because doing so will cause them to sin and thus, you become a stumbling block to another believer. By drinking in their presence, you are a hindrance to their spiritual growth. Even though the weaker believer is in error by believing drinking is a sin, you chose to apply the Law of Love and unconditional love for them and refrain from drinking when they are present. 1 Cor 8:13; 1 Cor. 8:9.



*“Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.” (1 Corinthians 8:13, NASB)*

*“But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.” (1 Corinthians 8:9, NASB)*

The Law of Supreme Sacrifice is directed toward God and is the highest law of Christian behavior. It generally applies to mature believers to refrain from normal living and legitimate functions in life to serve the Lord in some special way. Paul functioned under this law in 1 Cor. 9:1-15. Under the Law of Supreme Sacrifice, a few normal things in life are voluntarily set aside when they interfere with concentration on a special ministry or leadership function in life. Do not confuse this with legalism! 1 Cor. 9:4-6.

*“Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?” (1 Corinthians 9:4-6, NASB)*

### **Biblical Words For Wine**

Four words in the Word of God are translated “wine.” The Hebrew word יַיִן (yayin) means fermented wine like Noah, Nabal and the alcoholics of Ephraim drank. Gen. 9:24; 1 Sam. 25:37; Isaiah 24:9.

*“When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.” (Genesis 9:24, NASB)*

*“But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone.” (1 Samuel 25:37, NASB)*

*“They do not drink wine with song; Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.” (Isaiah 24:9, NASB)*

The Hebrew word תִּירוֹשׁ (tiyros) means non-fermented wine, often translated “new wine” made for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Gen. 27:28, Deut. 14:23.

*“Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine;” (Genesis 27:28, NASB)*

*““You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.” (Deuteronomy 14:23, NASB)*

The Hebrew word שֶׁכָּר (shêkâr) means strong drink or drink high in alcohol content in the Old Testament. Lev. 10:9; Isaiah 24:9.

*““Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die—it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations—” (Leviticus 10:9, NASB)*

The Greek word for fermented “wine” is οἶνος (oinos). 1 Tim. 5:23; Eph. 5:18.

*“No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” (1 Timothy 5:23, NASB)*

*“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,” (Ephesians 5:18, NASB)*



In Matthew 9:17, οἶνος (oinos) in context refers to “new wine” or non-fermented wine (non-alcoholic) - juice of the grapes.

*“Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”* (Matthew 9:17, NASB)

### **Principles About Drinking**

Drunkenness is a sin, not a sickness. 1 Peter 4:3-4; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:21.

*“For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;”* (1 Peter 4:3-4, NASB)

*“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,”* (Ephesians 5:18, NASB)

*“envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”* (Galatians 5:21, NASB)

Drunkenness and excessive drinking are sins and are not condoned in the Word of God. Prov. 20:1; Prov. 23:20.

*“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.”* (Proverbs 20:1, NASB)

*“Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;”* (Proverbs 23:20, NASB)

The cup at the Lord’s Supper was not alcoholic. Wine should never be used. It was at the Passover (in background) and the Law forbade leaven and fermentation.

Excessive eating (gluttony) is also a sin. Deut. 21:20; Prov. 23:21.

*““They shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.’”* (Deuteronomy 21:20, NASB)

*“For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe one with rags.”* (Proverbs 23:21, NASB)

Strong alcoholic drink can lead some to ignore what God has provided and to turn away from Him. Isaiah 5:11-12; Isaiah 5:22.

*“Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them! Their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, Nor do they consider the work of His hands.”* (Isaiah 5:11-12, NASB)

*“Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine And valiant men in mixing strong drink,”* (Isaiah 5:22, NASB)

Believers are commanded not to get drunk. Rom. 13:13; 1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Tim. 3:8; 1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Cor. 6:10; 1 Peter 4:3.



*“Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.” (Romans 13:13, NASB)*

*“not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.” (1 Timothy 3:3, NASB)*

*“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,” (1 Timothy 3:8, NASB)*

*“nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:10, NASB)*

Believers should not be shocked when they see another believer drunk. Just because a person becomes a believer does not mean they can in some instances stop drinking immediately. They need another believer's prayers and help through relating doctrine in a proper way, not through criticism. Eph. 5:18.

*“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,” (Ephesians 5:18, NASB)*

Each of the following case histories where drunkenness is condemned have different repercussions. Noah in Genesis 9:21, Nebal in 1 Samuel 25:36-37, the people of Ephraim in Isaiah 28:1, and Lot in Genesis 19:32.

*“He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.” (Genesis 9:21, NASB)*

*“Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light. But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone.” (1 Samuel 25:36-37, NASB)*

*“Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, And to the fading flower of its glorious beauty, Which is at the head of the fertile valley Of those who are overcome with wine!” (Isaiah 28:1, NASB)*

*““Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father.”“ (Genesis 19:32, NASB)*

In the Old Testament, strong drink was indicated for one who is “perishing” and wine to “him whose life is bitter.” Prov. 31:6-7.

*“Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to him whose life is bitter. Let him drink and forget his poverty And remember his trouble no more.” (Proverbs 31:6-7, NASB)*

Wine for the stomach's sake means Timothy had some type of gastric disorder. 1 Tim. 5:23.

*“No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” (1 Timothy 5:23, NASB)*

In Church history, some have drunk wine with their meals in moderation, such as Calvin, Spurgeon, and Luther. There are areas of the world where believers often drink wine at meal time.

When a believer or unbeliever permit their problems to overcome themselves and drink alcohol to avoid those problems, they are drinking as sublimation. A believer should claim the promises of God in the Word to handle the problems of life, not avoid them through sublimation.

Jesus Christ turned water into wine in John 2:1-11. This was real wine, alcoholic beverage, the best of



wines. We know from John 2:1-4 that He Himself did not drink.

*“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.”” (John 2:1-4, NASB)*

### **Leadership and Drinking**

Those in leadership positions should be well aware that drinking can impair judgment and slow down reflexes. This means presidents, government leaders, congress, etc. Leaders have to have good judgment in making decisions. Drinking hinders clear thinking. They should never drink to the point where their judgement is impaired. Wine attacks leadership judgment and a true sense of responsibility and objectivity in authority. Wine destroys certain leadership functions. Prov. 20:1; Prov. 31:4-5.

*“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.” (Proverbs 20:1, NASB)*

*“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Or for rulers to desire strong drink, For they will drink and forget what is decreed, And pervert the rights of all the afflicted.” (Proverbs 31:4-5, NASB)*

Alcoholic drink had some correct uses in Proverbs 31:6-7. However, the correct uses have to be set aside for a ruler of a nation. This also applies to prescription medicines and stimulants of any type.

*“Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to him whose life is bitter. Let him drink and forget his poverty And remember his trouble no more.” (Proverbs 31:6-7, NASB)*

Priests and prophets drank in Isaiah 28:7-8 with impaired judgement being the result.

*“And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; They reel while having visions, They totter when rendering judgment. For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place.” (Isaiah 28:7-8, NASB)*

Local church leaders should be aware of the problems with excessive drinking. 1 Tim. 3:8.

*“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,” (1 Timothy 3:8, NASB)*

Negative effects of alcohol include being a depressant, not a stimulant. Alcohol can also create impulsive behavior as well as abusive behavior. Some diseases are caused by excessive drinking such as cirrhosis of the liver, etc. The drinking problem is not an issue in salvation. Jesus Christ is the issue. Faith alone opens the door to heaven. This is no loophole for drinking. One does not lose their salvation because of drinking.

Where family problems exist where no drinking is involved become much worse when drinking is added. Here, the leadership of the parents is very important. Children observe how their parents handle problems and very often emulate their parents later in life. Children should be taught the reality of drinking, what horrible effects it has, but not as a taboo. All these points should not be construed as a permit to drink.