

Drinking

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We all know the Bible condemns drunkenness (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3, etc.). But setting that aside for the purposes of this article, I have a question for anyone who even flirts with drinking alcohol — **WHY?**

We are repeatedly warned about the danger of worldliness (e.g., I John 2:15-17) yet there are few things more closely identified with this world than the common practice of “having a drink or four.” Why would a Christian indulge in it and why do some even *defend* it?

Forget, for now, the arguments that a person may be genetically predisposed to becoming an alcoholic; or that the wine mentioned in the Bible bears little resemblance to the distilled spirits on the market today; or that it is difficult to know at what point an individual crosses the line from “mildly intoxicated” to “drunk.” The question is, why are you doing it? Why do you *want* to do it?

Paul warns against being mastered by something, even if it’s “lawful” (1 Cor. 6:12). But few people who are being ruled by a drug or habit will ever admit that they are being mastered by anything. They claim they can stop at any time. But that doesn’t change the fact: if you are being ruled by alcohol (or nicotine, or sex, or you-name-it) you’ve got a serious spiritual problem.

Moreover, if they choose to drink intoxicating beverages, Christians should ask themselves this question: how can you, in good conscience, support an industry that markets a drug that leads to the destruction of relationships and the deaths of thousands of people every year?

But, alas, no one ever thinks that *their* drinking will lead to all the awful things attributed to alcohol. We all like to think we’re the exception. Fine. But, if you choose to drink, you at least have to admit that you are knowingly contributing to the profits of companies that are producing a product that does far more damage than good — assuming it does any good at all, and I can’t imagine what that would be.

Hypocrisy swirls like a dust devil around this issue. Elitists ridicule those who smoke cigarettes because smokers endanger their own health and the health of others. I agree — there is no good reason to ever light up a cigarette; smoking, too, is devoid of any socially redeeming value. Yet... some of the same people who will lecture you about smoking do it with a drink in hand and think nothing about it. But “having a drink” — that socially respectable habit — is responsible for thousands of deaths every year. Over 10,000 people die annually in alcohol-related traffic accidents. As a grandfather of four teenagers who have reached driving age, that terrifies me.

When we are told not to love world or the things of the world (I John 2:15-17), what things — activities, habits, words, thoughts — do we think belong in the category of “things in the world”? What higher purpose does drinking alcohol serve? How does drinking alcohol bring you closer to God? How does it help others get closer to God?

Some people I’ve met can quote I Timothy 5:23 but couldn’t give you a precise definition of the gospel if their life depended on it. Why is that?

Some will disagree, but it seems to me that a mature Christian can see the downside to taking a drink, even occasionally. Given all the risks, and the chance that others might see them and be emboldened to try it themselves — which could lead to their spiritual and/or physical death — don't you think it's better to just to leave the bottle on the shelf?