

What the Bible Teaches about Drinking Alcohol

Sobriety or Intoxication

Introduction:

1. Lesson 1 gave an overview of the Bible's condemnation of drinking alcohol and the resulting drunkenness.
2. Upon reading such passages, many will argue that the Bible only condemns drunkenness and not the action that produces it.
 - a. To justify "moderate" consumption of alcohol
 - b. To justify "social drinking"
3. However, the same Bible that **condemns** drinking also **commands** sobriety.
4. These terms – "sobriety" and "intoxication" – are misunderstood by many.
5. Thus, the Bible teaching on these matters must be considered...

- I. "Be Sober" (1 Peter 5:8)
 - A. There are two Greek words that are translated as "sober" in the Bible.
 - B. The first is *sophron* (σωφρων) – meaning: "Safe or sound in mind; in one's senses; self-controlled; curbing one's desires and impulses."
 1. There are several derivatives of this word:
 2. *Sophrosune* (σωφροσυνη) – meaning: "Soundness of mind; sanity; self-control; sobriety." {Translated as "sobriety"}
 3. *Sophroneo* (σωφρονεω) – meaning: "To be of sound mind; to be in one's right mind; to exercise self-control; to curb one's passions; moderate."
 4. *Sophronizo* (σωφρονιζω) – meaning: "To make of sound mind; restore one to his senses; to moderate, curb, or control."
 5. *Sophronos* (σωφρονως) – meaning: "With sound mind; soberly, temperately, moderately, discreetly."
 - C. The other is *nepho* (νηφω) – meaning: "To be sober; to be temperate; to be calm and collected in spirit; to abstain from wine."
 1. A derivative of this word is *nephaleos* or *nephalios* (νηφαλεος / νηφαλιος) – meaning: "Sober, temperate; abstaining from wine; of things free from all wine, as vessels, offerings."
 2. Notice the connection between sobriety and abstaining from alcohol.
 - D. The command to be sober is enjoined upon every Christian.
 1. Romans 12:3 – Every Christian is to think soberly.
 2. 1 Timothy 3:1-3 – Elders are to be sober (cf. Titus 1:8).
 3. 1 Timothy 3:8 – Deacons are to be sober.
 4. 1 Timothy 3:11 – Wives of elders and deacons are to be sober.
 5. Titus 2:2 – Older men are to be sober.
 6. Titus 2:3 – Older women are to be sober.
 7. Titus 2:4 – Young women are to be sober.
 8. Titus 2:6 – Young men are to be sober.
 - E. The Bible explains clearly the reasons sobriety is needed and demanded.
 1. Acts 26:24-25 – To speak the Truth without fear
 2. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 – To be ready for the Lord's return
 3. 1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 – To defend one's salvation
 4. Titus 2:11-12 – To live in grace and please God
 5. 1 Peter 1:13-16 – To maintain holiness
 6. 1 Peter 4:7 – To pray acceptably
 7. 1 Peter 5:8-9 – To resist Satan

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- II. “Be Not Drunk” (Ephesians 5:18)
- A. There are varying human standards for determining drunkenness.
 - 1. Federally, a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% is legally considered intoxication, resulting in a DUI or DWI.
 - 2. Some states have stricter measurements for drivers under the age of 21 – a BAC of 0.02% or higher can result in a DUI.
 - 3. Other states have a “zero tolerance” policy for drivers under the age of 21 – anything but a 0.00% BAC is considered intoxicated.
 - 4. In Alabama, a BAC of 0.04% will result in a DUI for the driver of a commercial vehicle.
 - B. In fact, intoxication begins with the first drink.
 - 1. 0.00 – 0.05% BAC = impairment of speech, coordination, and balance
 - 2. 0.06 – 0.15% BAC = increased impairment, including memory
 - 3. 0.16 – 0.30% BAC = severe impairment; loss of consciousness
 - 4. 0.31 – 0.45% BAC = life-threatening; severe alcohol poisoning
 - C. How much poison could one consume before being considered poisoned?
 - 1. Note that the word “intoxicated” is based upon the word “toxin.”
 - 2. Ethyl alcohol is a poison!
 - a. Each drink destroys brain cells.
 - b. It damages the stomach, liver, and kidneys.
 - c. It is a depressant that alters the central nervous system.
 - d. It causes birth defects to infants in the womb.
 - e. It kills!
 - i. Cancer
 - ii. Heart Disease
 - iii. Alcohol related deaths
 - D. The Greek word translated as “be drunk” in Ephesians 5:18 is *methusko* (μεθυσκω) – meaning: “To intoxicate or make drunk; to become intoxicated.”
 - 1. In this verse, it is a “2nd person plural, present, imperative, passive form of the root word” (Lewis Willis, “The Sin of Social Drinking”).
 - 2. “It could accurately be translated today as, ‘be not being drunken or intoxicated’” (Nat Murphy, “Social Drinking”).
 - 3. “This prohibits the start of a process which ends in a drunken state. ...Do not find yourself in the process of BEING intoxicated” (Murphy).
 - 4. This means that the Christian is not to take the first drink!
 - E. Drunkenness begins with the first drink.
 - 1. One drink almost immediately produces an average BAC of 0.05%.
 - 2. One drink is defined as: one 12-ounce beer (5% alcohol), a 5-ounce glass of wine (12% alcohol), or 1.5 ounces of distilled alcohol (40%).
 - F. Do not drink with the drunken (Matthew 24:48-51).

Conclusion: Abstinence is the answer (1 Peter 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:22)!