



SOCIAL DRINKING

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SOCIAL DRINKING?

- Drinking alcohol socially, such as:
 - Drinking “responsibly” at parties and other social gatherings.
- Infrequently drinking alcohol, such as:
 - Drinking only on special occasions (New Year’s Eve, birthday, Thanksgiving, etc.).
 - A glass of wine at dinner.
 - A beer while mowing the grass.
 - Etc.
- Drinking alcohol in “moderation,” i.e. drinking without reaching the state of drunkenness.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ON THIS SUBJECT?

Ephesians 5:15-18

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

- Paul warns here of the need to walk carefully and with wisdom. In contrast, Paul a foolish and unwise walk is evidenced by being “**drunk with wine**,” wherein is “**excess**” [KJV] and “**debauchery**” [NASB, ESV], leading to “**reckless living**” [CSB] (Eph. 5:18).
 - It is impossible to walk in wisdom when our senses are dulled, influenced, and damaged by intoxicants (Prov. 20:1).
- Intoxicating beverages which alter our mental state is what is condemned in this passage, not just fermented wine. Furthermore, merely consuming such beverages is what this passage condemns and not just the final state of drunkenness.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ON THIS SUBJECT?

Ephesians 5:15-18

- The Greek verb form that Paul uses for “**drunk**” (Eph. 5:18) indicates the process of getting drunk, not just the final state of drunkenness. The word means:
 - “To intoxicate, make drunk; passive . . . to get drunk, become intoxicated” (Thayer).
 - “To make drunk, an inceptive verb that begins the process of the state expressed in *methuo* [3184], to drink to intoxication” (Vine).
 - So, more literally, Paul warns not to begin the process of being softened by alcohol.
 - How does one start this process? By drinking, of course. Therefore, Paul condemns drinking altogether, not just drunkenness.
- Wise children of God walking in the light must abstain from initiating the process of dulling our senses via intoxicating alcohol; that is the only way we can remain alert, “**awake**” (Eph. 5:8-14), and be “**filled with the spirit**” (Eph. 5:18).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ON THIS SUBJECT?

1 Peter 4:3

“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.”

- Three categories of drinking are condemned: **“drunkenness, carousing, and drinking bouts”** (NET).
 - Notice the third category condemns **“drinking parties”** / drinking bouts, not drunken parties.
 - The term refers to a social gathering at which wine is served (BDAG, 857).
 - Like Eph. 5:18, it’s not just drunkenness that is condemned, but also drinking itself.
 - Peter says drinking intoxicating beverages is **“doing the will of the Gentiles,”** and Paul shows in Eph. 4:17 that Christians **“should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind.”**
 - What better example do we need which displays **“futility of mind”** than that which dulls and negatively affects our senses like intoxicating beverages?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ON THIS SUBJECT?

1 Thessalonians 5:5-8

“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation”

- The word “**sober**” in this text means:
 - “To be free from the influence of intoxicants” (Vine).
 - “To be sober, to abstain from wine” (Strong).
 - Just like with Eph. 5:15-18 and 1 Pet. 4:3, it’s not just drunkenness that is condemned, but also drinking itself.

DOES JESUS TURNING WATER INTO WINE AUTHORIZE SOCIAL DRINKING?

- We all agree that Jesus turned “**water**” into “**wine**” during a wedding feast (party) in John 2:1-11, but did He turn the water into fermented (intoxicating) or unfermented wine?
 - Some argue that the word “**drunk**” in John 2:10 indicates the alcohol was fermented.
 - However, the word “**drunk**” does not always apply to drunkenness. It can also refer to the state of being filled or satiated (1 Cor. 11:21).
 - In the Bible, “**wine**” can refer to both alcoholic and non-alcoholic wine.
 - There are numerous examples throughout the Bible of the word “**wine**” being used in reference to unfermented wine, i.e. grape juice (Isa. 16:10, 65:8; Deut. 11:14; etc.).
 - But there are numerous other examples throughout the Bible using the word “**wine**” in reference to fermented wine, i.e. an alcoholic beverage (Num. 6:3; Isa. 5:11, 22; etc.).
 - **So, what kind of wine did Jesus produce?**

DOES JESUS TURNING WATER INTO WINE AUTHORIZE SOCIAL DRINKING?

- Jesus lived under the Law of Moses, and the Law of Moses condemned the consumption of alcohol and dispersing it to others (Hab. 2:15-16).
- Jesus lived a sinless life, never transgressing the Law of Moses (1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15).
 - **These verses are false if Jesus provided alcohol to the guests of the wedding feast.**
 - Neither did Jesus sin here, nor did He ever tempt others to sin (James 1:13).

WHAT ABOUT 1 TIMOTHY 5:23?

“No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.”

- Paul did not tell Timothy to become a social drinker but to take a little wine mixed with water for medicinal purposes. The text approves drinking wine as a form of medicine; it does not approve drinking wine for any and every reason, and only a “*little*” wine is authorized.
- If this is referring to an alcoholic drink, and if we follow the example of Timothy by using wine for medicinal purposes, we must:
 - Examine ourselves and our motives for using wine (2 Cor. 13:5; Rom. 12:9).
 - Stay on guard against the temptation to use wine non-medicinally (Eph. 4:27).

ADDITIONAL POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

- It is a sin to allow ourselves to become addicted to anything (1 Cor. 6:12; 2 Pet. 2:19; Rom. 6:15-17; Matt. 6:24).
 - Why would we put ourselves in a place of temptation to become addicted to something which we all realize is very addictive?
- We are repeatedly commanded to be sober-minded (1 Pet. 1:13, 4:7, 5:8, etc.).
 - This command does not specifically refer to drinking, but, by necessity, it generally condemns it.
- Drinking alcohol generally bears a negative impact on our influence.
 - We are commanded to carefully craft a positive influence (Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12).
 - We are commanded to avoid anything that may appear sinful to others (1 Thess. 5:22; 2 Cor. 8:20-21).

CONCLUSION

- Rather than drinking wine (spirits), wise people who are walking in the light fill themselves with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
 - Christians are filled with the Spirit when they are filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (Col. 1:9) by allowing the word of God to dwell in them (Col. 3:16).
- Just as the drunkard liberally fills himself with intoxicating spirits, Christians must liberally fill themselves with the Holy Spirit by heeding the words He has spoken.